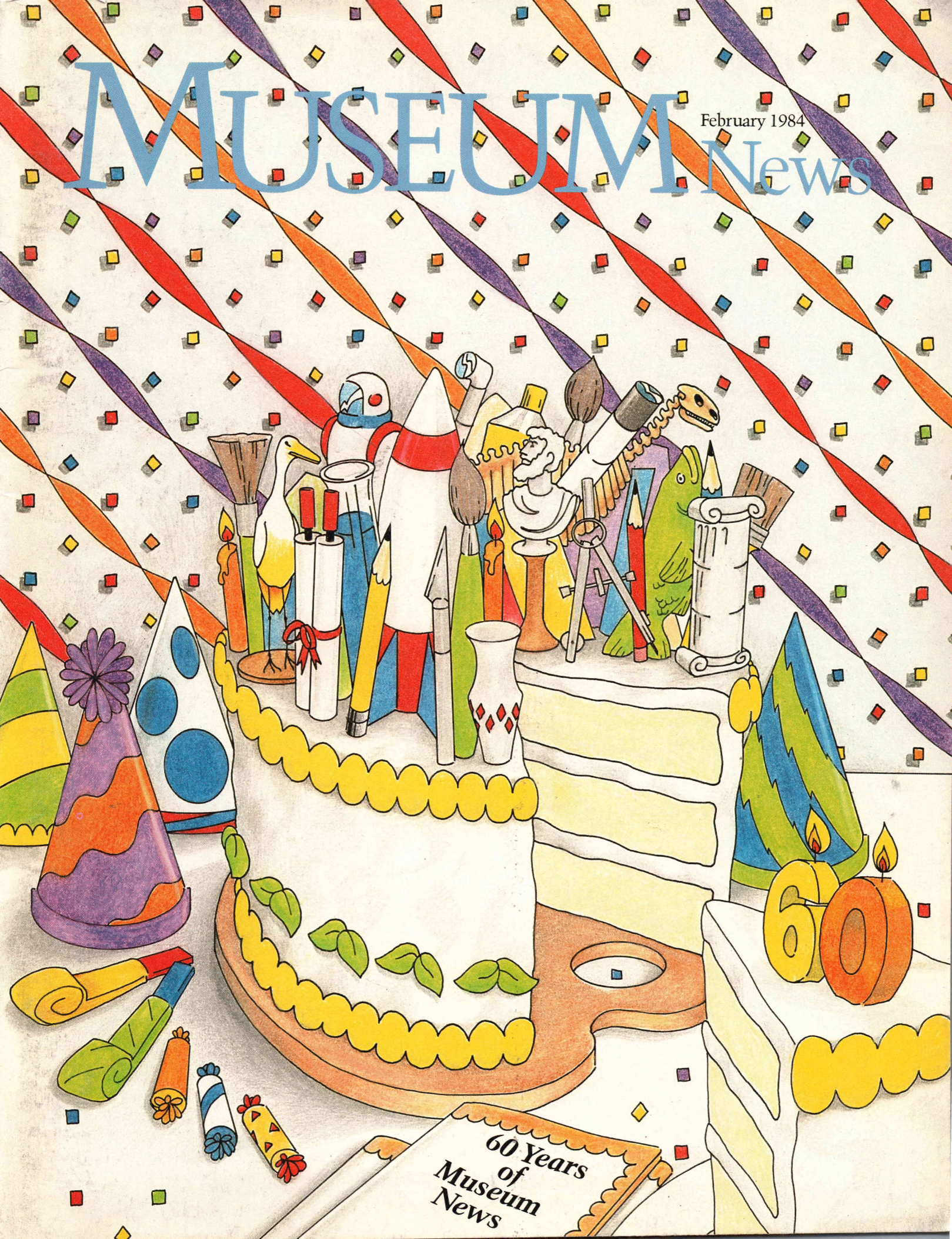


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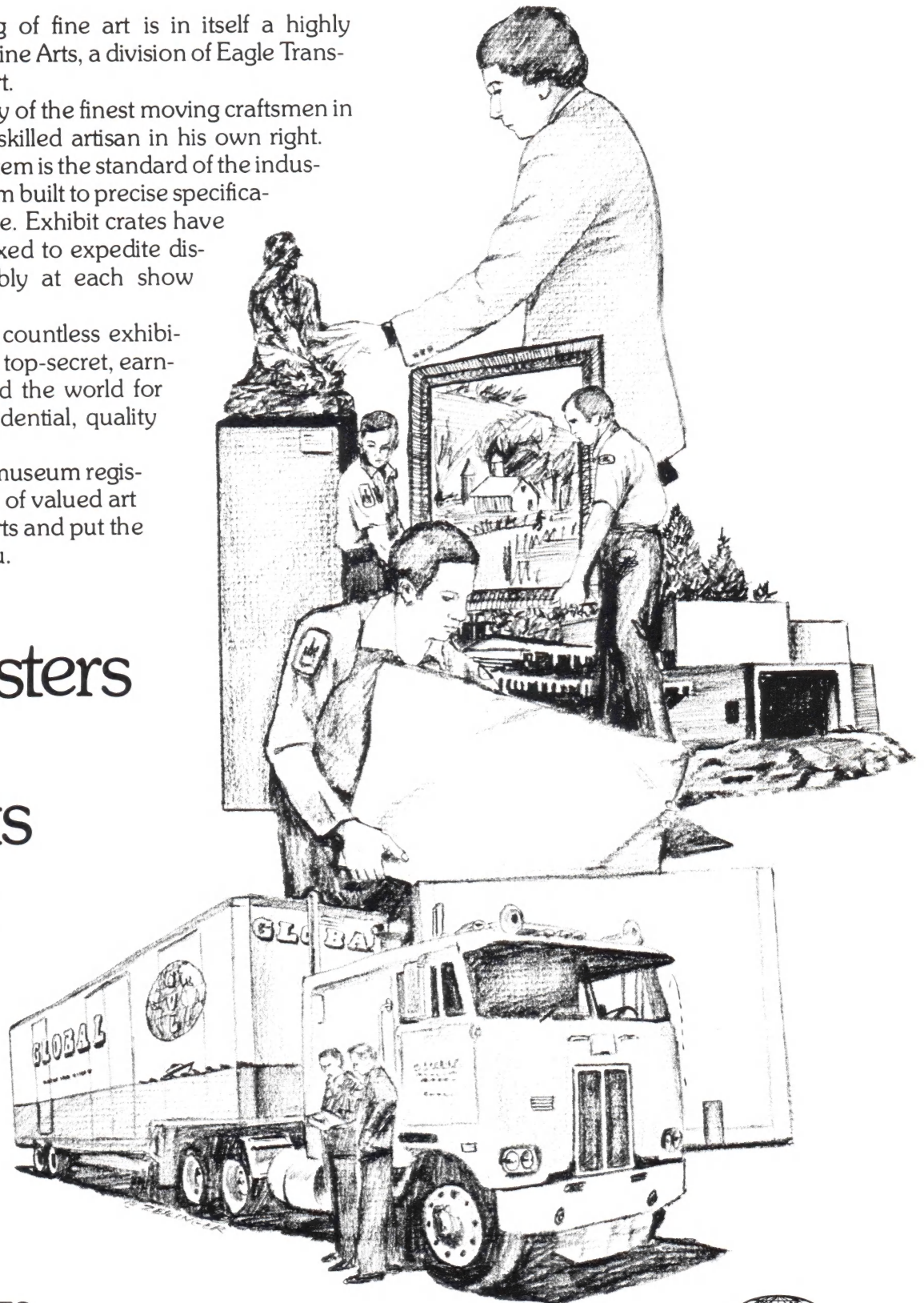
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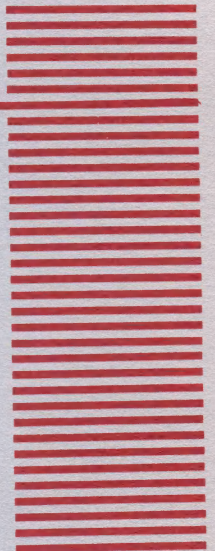
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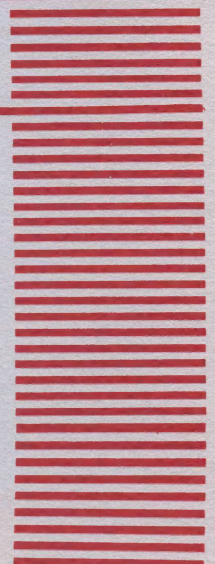
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# MUSEUM News

The Magazine of the American Association of Museums

February 1984

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The 60th anniversary of MUSEUM NEWS comes as we begin the prophetic year 1984. It is a time for looking forward as well as backward. Looking backward, we can see the development of museums and the museum profession reflected in the pages of our magazine—from the news of bequests and modern buildings in the early issues, when museums were just beginning to recognize a community of interests, to the philosophical essays of later issues, as museums continue to refine their thinking about their programs and purposes.

Looking forward, the \$200,000 matching grant from the Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation for a professional standards endowment and the emerging outline of the work of the Commission on Museums for a New Century make this a very exciting time for the American Association of Museums. The Bay Foundation grant provides an opportunity for a permanent commitment to our principal goal of improving the standards of museums and museum professionals. It is a tangible affirmation of the private sector's support of this very important work.

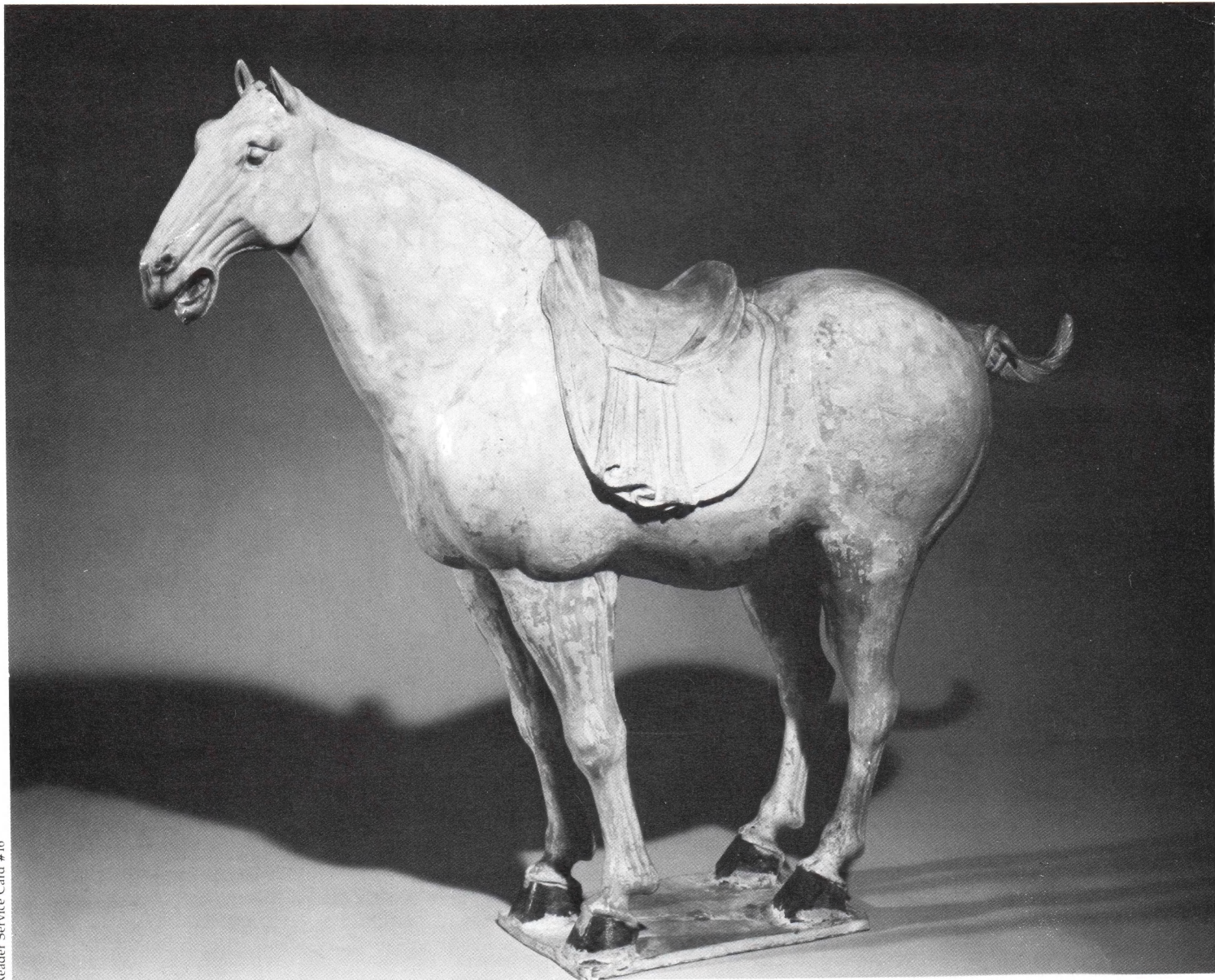
The Commission on Museums, too, has looked backward and forward. It has reassessed the impact of the last two decades on museums and sought fairly to reflect the concerns of our institutions. At the same it has looked ahead to provide leadership for addressing these concerns as we approach the new century. Inevitably, the work of the commission will have an impact on the AAM. As I have sat at open forums, colloquiums and commission meetings, I have realized that one important result of the commission will be a reexamination and strengthening of the AAM's ongoing programs and activities in service to museums.

The importance of the commission to the AAM's endeavors has already been demonstrated. Care of museum collections has been a major concern of the AAM's Accreditation Commission for the last few years, and early on the Commission on Museums recognized that this effort required leadership at the national level. Its work has been instrumental in securing a new congressional initiative for the examination of the long-term needs of museums in the areas of collections management, conservation and preservation. Congressman Sidney Yates has spearheaded this work as part of the fiscal 1984 appropriations for the Institute of Museum Services and the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities. In addition, the Humanities Endowment has launched a new effort in this area, and the Arts Endowment has increased the priority of its ongoing support for conservation.

The AAM must take the lead in realizing, in the near future, another concern of the Commission on Museums for a New Century—the continuous collection and analysis of statistical information on the universe of museums. The 1972 *Museums U.S.A.* and the 1979 Museum Universe Survey, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum Services respectively, are now hopelessly out of date. We must have the facts about museums if we are to be their effective advocates and representatives.

Much has changed for America's museums in the last 60 years; they are more diverse, more popular, more important; there are more of them. The AAM and its publications have likewise changed to keep pace with these developments. As we look, in 1984, to the future, we can be certain that the association will continue its tradition of service and leadership.





## Treasures From the Shanghai Museum

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston March 1984

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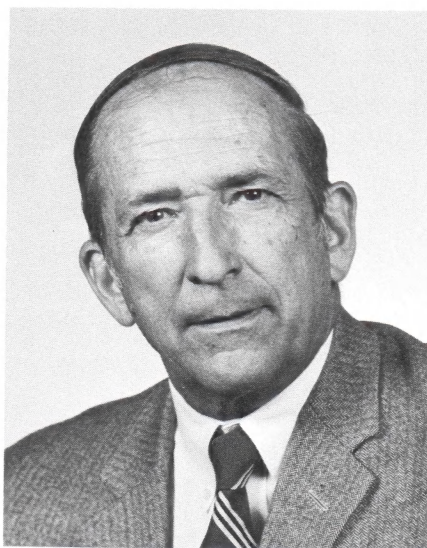


## Collecting Information, Not Objects

WILCOMB E. WASHBURN

The injunction to collect information, not objects, may seem to reflect an anti-object, anti-museum point of view. To the contrary, it is pro-object and pro-museum. More important, it is pro-scholarship. A heightened effort to focus on the collection of information about objects will in fact do more to preserve our material culture than the idealistic policies currently being pursued by most museums, policies that *theoretically* champion the uniqueness and sanctity of the object but *practically* ignore the impossibility of making the reality conform to the ideal.

When I published "Are Museums Necessary?" some 15 years ago in *MUSEUM NEWS*, I expected it to raise the hackles of many members of the museum profession, but I did not expect that my remarks would be so casually misinterpreted.<sup>1</sup> I have spent the intervening years assuring people that I was not recommending that the Mona Lisa and other unique objects be discarded and replaced by reproductions or descriptions. I now hope that I will not be misunderstood when I say that the museum world's commitment to the "real thing" is no guarantee that the real thing will be with us in perpetuity. Indeed, the attitude that any alternative to the real thing is somehow invalid or meretricious is the attitude most cal-



culated to leave the future without the heritage that museums claim to preserve in perpetuity.

Why are the ideal and the real so far apart in the museum world? One reason is that we have moved into a world of limitations in all aspects of our national life. In the museum world there are increasingly acute space and fiscal constraints. No longer *should* a curator or director consider the acquisition of an object without regard to the long-term costs of accessioning it, storing it, conserving it and, most important, providing information about it to others. Yet too often museum administrators *do* ignore those costs.

Another reason the ideal and the real are so far apart in the museum world is that we assume—incorrectly—that our collections are going to last forever. In claiming to provide preservation in perpetuity we are faced with the prob-

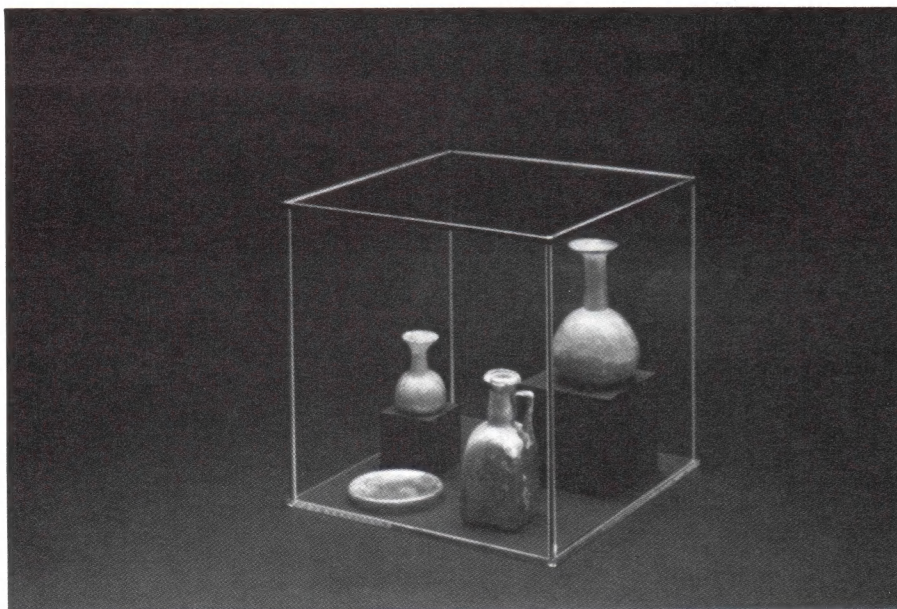
lem of defining "perpetual." Is anything perpetual? Permanent possession in some American real estate transactions is expressed in terms of 99-year leases. In England such leases sometimes use the figure 999 years. Do not museums have an obligation to consider perpetual in longer terms than either 99 or 999 years? I think they do.

There is a good deal of cynicism among museum observers as to what "perpetual" means in a museum context. Although outsiders assume that once an object has gotten into a museum, it stays there, in fact there is a continuing erosion of objects in the care of museums. Sometimes nature takes its toll, whether through fire, flood or deterioration; sometimes man is responsible, either officially through formal deaccessioning or unofficially through theft, negligence or other forms of loss.<sup>2</sup> Some museum collections have never been formally accessioned and have only a ghostly existence. Scholars seeking to find objects in a museum are often dismayed to find that those listed in its catalog cannot be produced. It would be impossible to say that any particular specimen, theoretically consigned in perpetuity to a museum, has an actual life of so many years, but there is no doubt that perpetuity, as a practical matter, is as inapplicable to a museum collection as it is to most other aspects of the record of human achievement, even without regard to the possibility of atomic wars in the future.

Thomas Jefferson, in seeking a way to preserve the documentary heritage of the past, recommended "multiplication of copies" as the surest guarantee

WILCOMB E. WASHBURN is director of the Office of American Studies at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. This essay is a revised version of a paper presented at the AAM Annual Meeting, San Diego, California, June 7, 1983.



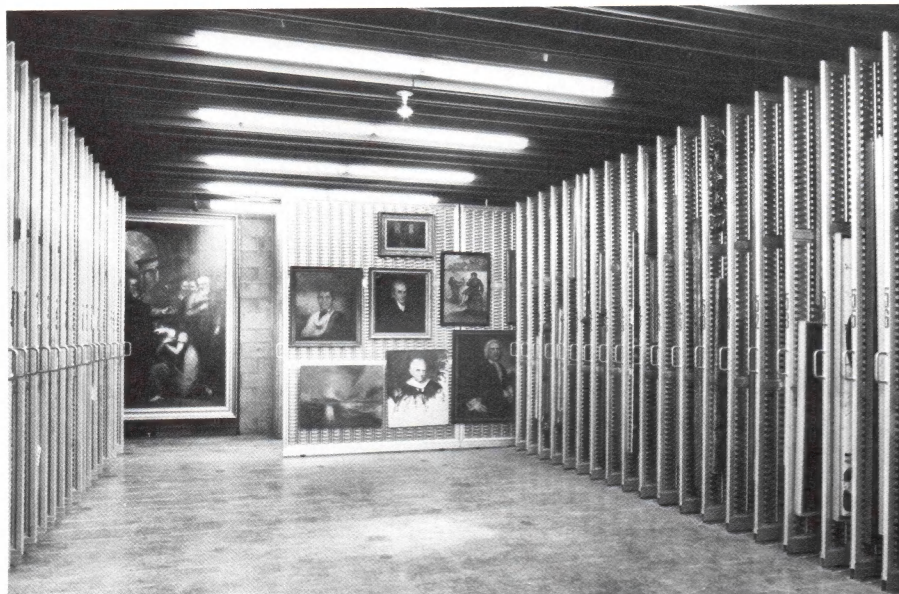


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## COMMENTARY

of preservation of the manuscript record of our history. In his own case, precious manuscripts, including laboriously collected Indian vocabularies, were lost to posterity because they existed only in unique copies. Fortunately the impetus given by Jefferson has helped us preserve, by documentary reproduction, the manuscript record of our past. Had the effort by students of our past been merely to collect manuscripts, posterity would have been less well served. My own institution, the Smithsonian Institution, collected the manuscripts and objects associated with James Smithson, its founder, only to have most of them disappear in the Smithsonian Institution Building fire of 1865. I am now looking for clues to Smithson material that had the good fortune of *not* being collected and assembled at the Smithsonian Institution in the 19th century.

In the world of books the microform revolution has been a new guarantee that the precious content of certain objects—books—will never be completely lost so long as the planet and solar system survive. As the original books disintegrate or are lost or stolen, their surrogates—the copies in microfilm, microfiche or microform—provide an inexpensive record of the content of those objects and a compact way of recording the output of one generation for generations in perpetuity (however long that may be). This revolution has not affected the prices of the original books, which continue to escalate, nor does it put specialized libraries like the Newberry Library in Chicago, the Folger Library in Washington or the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, out of business. Indeed, those institutions have led the move to a broadened dissemination of their materials through multiplication of copies. These libraries have worked not only to add books to their collections and to provide inexpensive copies for purchase but have developed sophisticated bibliographical aids for using their collections and financial support for special-



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## COMMENTARY

ized research directed toward solving the larger scholarly questions they pose.

In the world of objects, are we not face to face with the same problem that manuscripts and books earlier encountered, and cannot the solution be similar? Some would assert that traditional museum objects, unlike books and manuscripts, are in fact unique and irreplaceable. The argument is sincere but misguided. It is also, usually unconsciously, commercial.

In the August 1982 issue of *Harper's*, Edward C. Banfield discusses the outraged reaction of the art world to the Nelson Rockefeller Collection of high quality reproductions of contemporary art. He also comments on the turmoil caused by professional forgers like Hans van Meegeren who have demonstrated how easy it is to fool professional scholars and museum people. What is being protected by those who oppose high quality reproductions, according to Banfield, is not the "real thing" but the commercial and prestige values that derive from limited access to original works of art.<sup>3</sup>

There has been less opposition to the Polaroid Museum Replica Collection created in cooperation with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Polaroid Replicas are made individually by a direct photographic process from the original painting or watercolor using a room-sized camera at the Museum of Fine Arts. Unlike reproductions of paintings made from small photographic negatives, Polaroid Replicas preserve detailed information that is lost in compressing all of the visual information onto a small negative. The relationship between the Polaroid Corporation and the Museum of Fine Arts has been one of mutual respect and mutual advantage. Scholarship and future generations are the beneficiaries.

Those who allow carefully regulated high quality reproduction of paintings and watercolors may still assert that no similar process can provide reliable or appropriate reproduction of three-dimensional objects. Yet the rapid development of technology in fields such as holography is challenging such asser-

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Other information substitutes for



*Achromatic hologram by the Polaroid Corporation of The Bartlett Head, Museum of Holography, New York*

three-dimensional objects are photogrammetric replications of complex objects such as boat hulls or Buddhist statues. In these representations the third dimension is captured in a way that was impossible to achieve in earlier years. How many museums have the space or the money to preserve large ships or statues? May museums not capture the "original" more meaningfully and more usefully for future generations by employing their resources to catalog information *about* many disappearing specimens instead

of purchasing a few for exhibition? Or, ideally, by doing both?

The curve of geometric increase in the numbers of objects being collected by most museums will surely flatten out. The Smithsonian Institution is now approaching its 100th million object, but it will not continue to see the same rate of growth that led to the rapid accumulation of this monumental collection. Why? Unlike rats in a biological sink, curators are not savagely fighting each other for access to the rapidly diminishing space available in existing facilities. But they are beginning to impose limitations on their collecting proclivities in recognition of the problem.

Tom Frye at the Oakland Museum in California, C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky at the Peabody Museum at Harvard, Ben Labaree at the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut and others all indicate that selection of objects for their museums in the next few years will be cautiously undertaken. This new restraint on the part of museum curators derives in part, I would submit, from recognition that space is running out and that money for additional space for future collecting activities is going to be harder to get. As a result a new problem arises: the freezing of museum collections derived from a particular set of historical circumstances in the past and the slighting of objects remaining to be collected in the future. Who is to say that the objects being spawned in ever-mounting numbers should be collected with less intensity than the objects of the past? Certainly most of us who work in museums have a preference for the past and abhor the plastic age in which we are condemned to live. But from the point of view of both popular culture and pure scholarship, should not the present age, and the ages to come, have a claim to equal space in our museums? If so, how are we going to provide it?


Tom Frye has suggested that eventually we will create different types of accessions, some permanent, some interim or probationary, the latter of which could be deaccessioned without the formal action of boards of trustees. Whatever the process by which we come to terms with perpetuity and the plethora of objects that our civilization is producing, it will certainly be necessary to draw finer distinctions between

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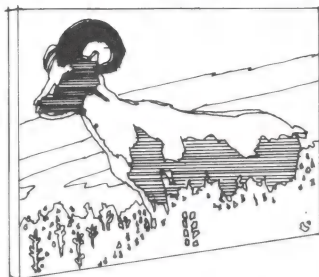
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## COMMENTARY

objects of permanent or unique value and those of temporary or mass appeal. But more important, there will be a need to give renewed consideration to increasingly sophisticated methods of retaining data about objects as a substitute for the "real thing."

The report that constituted the basis for planning the Museum Support Center, which the Smithsonian dedicated on May 16, 1983, sought to project future growth of collections and included growth curves for particular collections.<sup>4</sup> In almost every case the exponential curves, prepared by a statistician and programmer from the Smithsonian's Office of Computer Services and based on a regression analysis of the actual historical figures, met with disbelief from curators, who plotted more modest projections of collection increases. The Support Center was designed primarily to relieve the overcrowded, warrenlike storage conditions of the Smithsonian's museums on the Mall. The largest of all Smithsonian buildings, it contains 308,000 square feet (about 4.5 acres under roof) at ground level, with three levels of storage, for a total of 901,692 cubic feet of space. It was built at a cost of \$29 million. Vast though the building is, administrators expect to have to build more space "pods" adjacent to it before the end of the century.

How much does museum space really cost? George Hartman, the distinguished Washington architect, has made the following estimates of the capitalized cost of providing 100,000 square feet of museum space:

### Cost of Museum Space

Building . . . . . \$125/sq. ft.

Indirect costs at

one-third . . . . . \$40

Land at \$50/floor

area ratio . . . . . \$50

\$215/sq. ft., without  
interest

Equivalent rent at

14% . . . . . \$30/sq. ft.



#### Operations

(\$2 million/  
100,000 sq. ft.) . . . . \$20  
\$50/sq. ft./yr.

Capitalized at .10 . . . . \$500/sq. ft.

Cost of 100,000 sq. ft.  
of museum space: . . . . \$50 million

#### Cost per Museum Object

##### Stored object:

\$50/sq. ft. x 2 sq. ft. . . . . \$100/yr.  
Capitalized at .10 . . . . \$1,000/object

##### Displayed object:

\$50/sq. ft. x 50 sq. ft. . . . . \$2,500/yr.  
Capitalized at .10 . . . . \$25,000/object

Note that the capitalized cost of providing 100,000 square feet of museum space—that is, the real cost reflecting the endowment necessary to maintain the space—is \$50 million. That comes to \$1,000 per stored object (assuming 2 square feet of space) or \$25,000 per displayed object (assuming 50 square feet). When Hartman presented these

figures at a 1983 seminar Peter Powers, the Smithsonian's general counsel who was chairing the session, found the figures "startling" and noted that the Smithsonian was just beginning to look at these costs on a realistic basis.<sup>5</sup>

Startling as these figures seem, they reflect the present-day reality. The state of Nevada estimates the average yearly cost of storage for anthropological collections as \$1,080 per cubic foot, but charges customers only 50 percent of the estimated cost.<sup>6</sup> Figures such as George Hartman's and the state of Nevada's are not yet recognized or accepted by museum people, who are apt to quote more modest figures that do not reflect the ultimate costs, the capitalized costs or the unfunded liabilities lurking behind the immediate costs.

A recent survey by the U. S. Department of the Interior drew attention to the problem of "unbridled collection behavior." Institutions were asked to compile the costs of operating their collections management program per

year at present costs and then to project these costs, for future acquisitions, over the expected life of the facility and, finally, to compute the average cost of "curating" a cubic foot of space. Estimates ranged from \$3.70 to \$12-15,000! <sup>7</sup> It is clear from the incredible diversity of responses that the question of future costs of space has not yet been subjected to consistent analysis by American museums.

When I asked within the Smithsonian for an estimate of the cost of storage in the Museum Support Center, I was given the figure of \$32.63 per cubic foot. This figure reflects the building cost of the storage space to the government without consideration of the long-range capitalization costs or the associated laboratories and office spaces for the use of those working with the collections.

A large component of the Museum Support Center is laboratories and offices for the Conservation Analytical Laboratory (23,831 square feet), a library (4,826 square feet), the Informa-

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## COMMENTARY

tion Services section utilizing computers controlling inventories of descriptions of the specimens (3,010 square feet), photography studios (2,081 square feet) and administrative areas (74,763 square feet). Compare the square footages for these functions with the amounts devoted to storage: 36,402 square feet for the Museum of American History and 316,156 square feet for the Museum of Natural History. The strong emphasis on conservation and analysis stands in marked contrast to the Smithsonian's posture 25 years ago when I began working there. I was a member of the committee which recommended that the Smithsonian organize a Conservation Analytical Laboratory. The then director of the U.S. National Museum felt that since we

had gotten along without such a lab previously he saw little reason to establish one, but eventually the lab was authorized to be set up in cramped quarters in the basement of the then unbuilt Museum of History and Technology (now the National Museum of American History). Computers were also a late development at the Smithsonian Institution, and originally were used for payroll and other routine personnel matters. Only recently has the Smithsonian begun to achieve up-to-date informational control over its collections. Does not the growth of these functions, in relationship to the collections, support my thesis that museum priorities in collecting should emphasize information about, and preservation of, the object over the object itself? A theoretical celebration of the object as object too often masks the object's practical disappearance or disintegration, leaving nothing behind for future generations.

Over the vehement objection of a number of scholars, the Peabody Museum at Harvard has deaccessioned and

sold a collection of American Indian paintings by the 19th-century portraitist Henry Inman. The museum took the action in the light of the constraints I have delineated here. It was concluded that the expense of keeping the paintings exceeded their value for anthropological research and teaching, the mission of the Peabody Museum. As Lamberg-Karlovsky has pointed out in *Symbols*, photographic copies of the paintings are "fully adequate for the purposes of anthropological teaching and research."<sup>8</sup> With the money realized by the sale and additional space in the Cambridge Electron Accelerator Building next door (vacated by Harvard atomic physicists several years earlier), the Peabody has undertaken an upgrading of its storage facilities, conservation laboratories and exhibition halls to bring them closer to the standard necessary to preserve for future generations the important specimens that it does possess.

When we are collecting objects we are collecting information. What I am proposing is that the emphasis be put

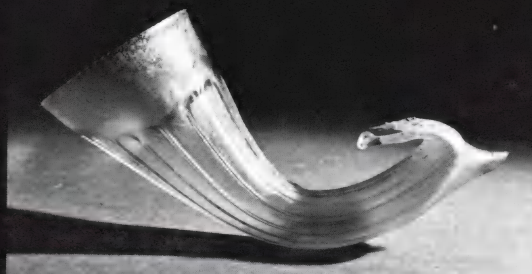
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on the information rather than on the object. The object can become a fetish that, if we merely worship it, impedes our understanding of the object itself and its place in our society. And, in the process of being worshipped, it sometimes crumbles in our hands. Δ

## NOTES

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3. Edward C. Banfield, "Art versus Collectibles: Why Museums Should Be Filled with Fakes," *Harper's*, August 1982, pp. 28-34.
4. Collections Policy and Management Study Committee, Philip Leslie, chairman, "A Report on the Management of Collections in the Museums of the Smithsonian Institution," September 26, 1977, pp. 43-129.

5. "Collection Objects of Uncertain Status—Indefinite Loans, Deposits, and Undocumented Objects: What Are the Museum's Alternatives?" American Law Institute-American Bar Association Seminar, Washington, D. C., May 17, 1983.
6. Letter to author from Donald R. Tuohy, curator of anthropology, Nevada State Museum, Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nev., June 6, 1983; Tuohy, *Handbook of Nevada Antiquities Law*, Nevada State Museum, Popular Series, no. 5, June 1982.
7. U.S. Department of the Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, "The Curation and Management of Archeological Collections: A Pilot Study," September 1980, pp. 3, 63-64, abridged version of a report with the same title by Alexander J. Lindsay, Jr., Glenna Williams-Dean and Jonathan Haas, published by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1979. The original version of the report is available in print or microfiche from the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Va., publication 296423/AS.
8. C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "The Peabody Renovates: First Major Reconstruction in 117 Years Addresses Collections Needs," *Symbols* (publication of the Peabody Museum and Department of Anthropology, Harvard University), Winter 1982, pp. 2-12.

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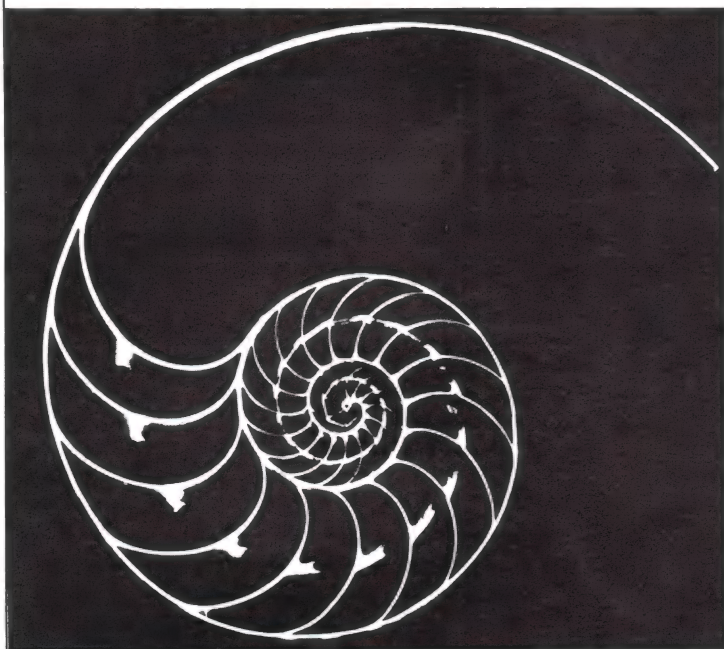
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## Welcome to Washington

MARIFRED CILELLA



*Delegates to the 1924 AAM Annual Meeting in Washington posed with President Calvin Coolidge on the White House lawn.*

Sixty years ago delegates to the 19th annual meeting of the American Association of Museums gathered on the White House lawn for a group picture with President Calvin Coolidge. This June some 3,500 museum professionals, trustees and volunteers will once again meet in the nation's capital. The 79th annual meeting of the AAM will take place June 10-14, 1984, and, like its predecessor, will take special advantage of its federal setting in this prophetic year.

Since that spring day in 1924 America's museums have experienced unparalleled change and development. The number of museums has more than quadrupled. The evolution of the museum profession and the increasing specialization of museum work have brought a new level of sophistication to the daily operations of institutions large and small. None has been immune to fluctuations in the nation's economy and to the increasing responsibility and regulation of government. All these developments have generated

careful analysis within our profession. They make it more crucial than ever that museum professionals gather periodically to discuss everything from current standards in collections management to the ethical, legal and financial issues confronting museums to public programs and outreach to the community.

This year's theme, "Museums in Service to America," is timely and well suited to the nation's capital. First, and and most important, the Planning Committee hopes that both novice and seasoned museum professionals, trustees and volunteers will come away from the meeting with a revitalized sense of the important role that museums can and do play in the communities of which they are a part. A second goal, uniquely appropriate to Washington, is that this message of our service to the public be carried to the nation's decision makers. While we won't be posing with the president on the White House lawn, we are planning special events that will involve members of Congress in the meeting. There will be legislative briefings and appointments for delegates who wish to visit their elected representatives.

Speakers and panelists will discuss legislative topics such as appropriations, legislative authorizations and tax issues. Among the many other topics to be considered are museum governance, the challenges for museums undergoing rapid changes, the development of professional training and the place of computers in today's museums.

Washington is more than the seat of government; it is an exciting city that attracts visitors from around the world to view its wonders, not the least of which are its museums. Annual meeting delegates, too, will have the opportunity to experience these national and local treasures, and in a unique way. More than 50 museums will welcome delegates to view their collections and some behind-the-scenes activities. On two evenings during annual meeting week there will be receptions at the great federal museums on or near the Mall, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Air and Space Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the National Museum of

MARIFRED CILELLA is the special activities coordinator at the AAM.



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## IN-HOUSE

American Art, the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of Natural History and the National Portrait Gallery. Another evening the city's community museums, both privately and government owned, will open their doors to delegates touring by shuttle bus and on foot. From Dumbarton Oaks to the Textile Museum, from the Woodrow Wilson House to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, these institutions testify to the diversity of interests in the capital city. A picnic is planned at the National Zoo, as well as visits to historic sites across the Potomac River, such as Mt. Vernon and Woodlawn Plantation, and to museums in Alexandria and Fairfax County. One- and two-day postconference tours will take delegates to museums within a 100-mile radius of Washington. And for those who look beyond the borders of this country, an exciting study tour to Greece is being planned.

The exhibit hall will once again be a focal point for annual meeting activities, hosting registration, the opening reception and many informal get-togethers. This valuable marketplace of information and services for museum professionals will be made as accessible and useful to the delegates as possible.

The meeting's roster of chairmen includes J. Carter Brown, general chairman; S. Dillon Ripley, honorary chairman; Paul Perrot, honorary vice-chairman; Michael Botwinick, program chairman; and Douglas Evelyn, local arrangements chairman. They, the entire Planning Committee and the AAM invite you to Washington this June to be part of "Museums in Service to America." The gathering promises to be the largest ever, and Washington is indeed an appropriate site for this record-breaking event. Sixty years from now, when AAM delegates gather for the 139th time, we hope they will look back on 1984 as not only one of the largest annual meetings but one of the most important and effective. Δ

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

Volume 62, Number 3

FEBRUARY 1984

At the second annual meeting of the American Association of Museums in 1907, delegates were caught up in the fervor of having created a new national organization with considerable potential. There were approximately 160 members, and the association, which then had no staff, was operating with an astounding annual income of \$592 and expenses of only \$100.25.

In the blush of their success, the members gathered in Pittsburgh wanted to establish a journal based on the papers they presented at annual meetings. But some of the more cautious among them worried that the association was taking on too many tasks in its infant state. W.J. Holland, director of the museum department of the Carnegie Institute, was one of the more vociferous naysayers. In so many words, he labeled the idea hogwash, citing in particular what he thought would be the lamentable and unpleasant task of the editor of a journal for the museum profession:

The position of an editor is not altogether an agreeable one... Not everything which comes to his hands is fit for publication in the form in which it is presented. Articles often lack literary style and finish, and sometimes when possessing literary style articles lack substance. I frankly say that I would not like to be the editor of [such] a journal... unless I had autocratic powers and considerable financial resources at my command.

So many members agreed with Mr. Holland that a compromise was reached. For a while, the association published the proceedings of annual meetings in book form. Then, in 1917, the *Museum News Letter* was inaugurated, but was replaced in 1918 by *Museum Work*, a quarterly that was published until 1926.

Members of the association were still searching for the right medium of communication. They needed a periodical that struck a good balance between news and ideas, something that conveyed a sense of the burgeoning world of museums in America. So with very little fanfare, on January 1, 1924, the first issue of THE MUSEUM NEWS was published, and it has appeared with regularity ever since.

At first it was a four-page newsletter, much like a smaller version of today's *Aviso*, containing news of indi-



vidual museums, information about the activities of the association, and advertisements from suppliers of products and services for museums. In 1959, as part of an expanded program of AAM member services, it became a monthly magazine "intended to reflect the spirit of the American museum renaissance." In 1975, the magazine adopted its present bimonthly frequency and transferred the responsibility for reporting current news to *Aviso*.

The 60th anniversary of a magazine may lack the magical appeal of 50, 75 or 100, but it is no less significant, if for no other reason than it represents many pages, many articles, many volumes. Even more important, it repre-



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## EDITOR'S NOTES

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sents 60 years of a profession's commitment to documenting and discussing the ideas and events that are evidence of its vitality.

It is fascinating to look at the early issues. Sometimes the significance of a distant event has been muted by time. What surely seemed monumental on January 1, 1924—the first use of X-rays to study mummies—seems almost humorous today. There is also a certain amount of déjà vu in the inaugural issue—a Washington annual meeting in the works, a new edition of a directory of museums in the United States, a prediction that “the museum of the future will give more attention to subjects which affect intimately the life and interests of the people.” And there's even an innocently chilling note: AAM director Charles Richards, visiting Munich to study museums, endured the annoying inconvenience of a “Putsch” by a political ruffian named Adolf Hitler, but reported that he had collected “splendid photographs.”

We planned this anniversary issue with several objectives in mind. We wanted 1984 readers to have a sense of the magazine's origins, so we have reprinted the first issue and reviewed the early years in part to entertain, in part as a reminder of the magazine's long history. We wanted to show the continuity of ideas and issues in a positive light, as a sign of solidity rather than redundancy. And we hoped that by celebrating this milestone, we would be setting the stage for an even more productive and eventful next 60 years.

For the first four decades, museum professionals read in the magazine about the blossoming of the museum in America, as reflected particularly in the recurring topic of financial support and in new buildings that have since become architectural landmarks. Then, as museums matured and their role in society became more complex and more demanding, the magazine took on a different flavor. It might be said that as the museum profession came of age, so did *MUSEUM NEWS*. To review the thinking that has shaped museums in this country during the past 20 years, we have chosen some classic articles by leaders in the museum field, most of whom offer some current reflections in afterwords written especially for this anniversary issue. Our intent is to honor not just *MUSEUM NEWS*, but the

continuity of museums as recorded and discussed in these pages for six decades.

I take pride in being the ninth editor of this magazine. Nine is no more magical than 60, but there is something solid and venerable about it. With apologies to W.J. Holland's memory, I can say unreservedly that editing *MUSEUM NEWS* is not the onerous task he predicted it would be. We have never had considerable financial resources at our disposal, and autocratic power is not, as far as I know, part of my job description, but that does not diminish the pleasure and satisfaction involved.

Anniversary issues like this one tend to glorify the past and give short shrift to the future. Those of us who have worked on *MUSEUM NEWS* over the years are proud of what the magazine has become, but we are not so blinded by our success that we are unable to be objective about our shortcomings. My own eight and a half years of investment in *MUSEUM NEWS* do not keep me from believing there are ways the magazine could well change, to the benefit of its readers and museums in general.

My wish list for the next 60 years is headed by a desire for more punch. The characteristic I find most frequently missing from these pages is verve, because museum people, in my view, are rarely willing to put strong opinions in writing. The next several decades will be eventful ones for museums in this country, as they assume an even stronger position as institutions of quality, authority and permanence. It is no time to be bland. The pages of *MUSEUM NEWS* deserve to be more animated; this should be the place to challenge assumptions, test ideas, argue principles, and to do it with the conviction that a high level of intellectual discourse is critical to the health of a profession whose very existence centers on the communication of ideas about our heritage.

Read on for the best of *MUSEUM NEWS*, 1924-84. And here's to the next 60 years!

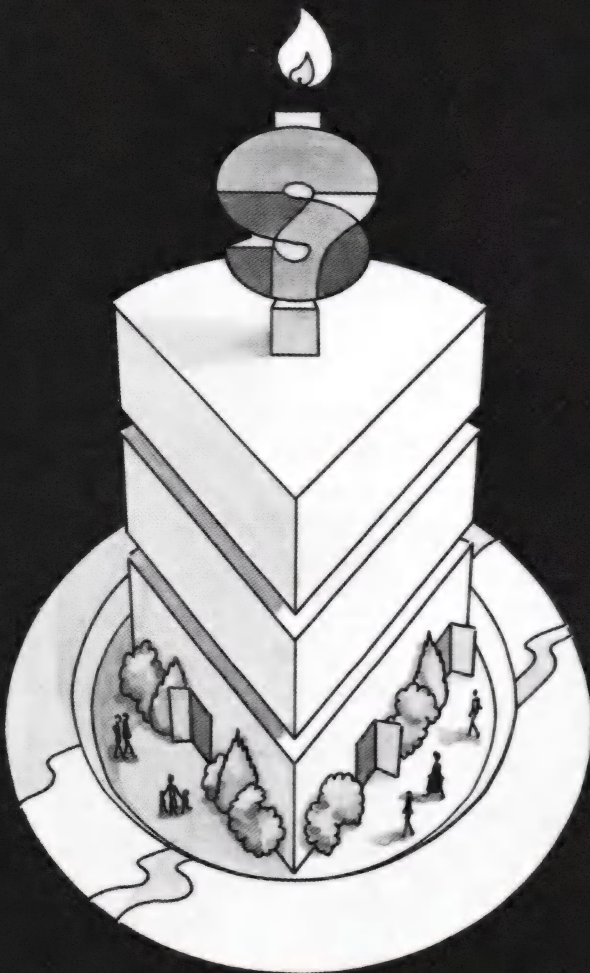
*Ellen Cochran Hicks*



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60 YEARS OF MUSEUM NEWS

# Finances and Foundations



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## The First 40 Years

It is difficult to review 60 years of MUSEUM NEWS without a nagging sense that the more things change, the more they remain the same. Seen another way, the recurring themes are a sign of a continually evolving and maturing profession with a sound sense of purpose.

The next four pages carry readers back to 1924, when the first issue of MUSEUM NEWS appeared. Then, two articles review themes that recurred with some frequency during the next 40 years: the elusive (but ever-present) matter of money and the more solid subject of museum architecture.



# THE MUSEUM NEWS

PUBLISHED TWICE A MONTH BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

VOL. I

JANUARY 1, 1924

NO. 1

## NEW ENGLAND MUSEUMS HOLD CONFERENCE

TWO-DAY MEETING HELD AT  
PROVIDENCE

New England members of The American Association of Museums gathered on December 6 for the usual winter New England Conference. The meeting was held at Providence and the hosts were the Rhode Island School of Design and the Park Museum of that city. Two days of sessions were followed by an inspection on Saturday of Providence museums and libraries.

The gathering on the first morning at the School of Design was addressed by two speakers not engaged in museum work. Norman M. Isham spoke on *Old Houses as Museum Material*, bringing out the idea which has found acceptance in the Old World—that historic houses may be converted into branch museums. Professor Kendall K. Smith of Brown University, stressed the necessity for taking material out of cases and getting it near to students, if the colleges are to profit by museum cooperation.

The afternoon was given over to inspection of the eight buildings of the Rhode Island School of Design, and ended with a tea at the home of Theodore Francis Green and Miss Green.

The Providence Art Club gave a dinner to the delegates, and two addresses followed. Hermon Carey Bumpus spoke of trends in museum work and Professor Paul W. Sachs, of the Fogg Art Museum, recounted experiences in Europe.

Two sessions on Friday were held at the Park Museum. Technical papers were read on *The Lecture Lesson in a Museum for Children*, by Inez Scott Harlow, *Cooperation in New England Archaeology*, by Warren K. Moorehead, *Usefulness of a Museum*, by Luther D. Burlingame, *The Connecticut Historical Society*, by Florence V. Paull Berger and *Harvard's Tree Museum*, by E. H. Wilson. Papers of general interest were also read by Harlan H. Ballard and F. Schuyler Mathews.

At luncheon, which was tendered by the Park Museum, the proposal was made to establish in Providence an

(Continued on fourth page)

## DATE OF WASHINGTON MEETING SET

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DECIDES  
ON MAY 10 TO 13

The nineteenth annual meeting of The American Association of Museums will be held at Washington, D. C., on May 12 and 13 and will be preceded by a week-end of entertainment. These dates have been set by the Executive Committee with reference to the meeting of The American Federation of Arts which is to be held on the three succeeding days. The Association of Art Museum Directors will also meet just before or just after The American Association of Museums.

The opportunity afforded to attend the meetings of several organizations should bring large delegations from the west and the south, which usually are not well represented. In anticipation of a record meeting, plans are being laid to make the Washington meeting the biggest and the best one in the history of the Association.

It is an innovation to start the convention with social functions, but the experiment is to be tried in the belief that the technical sessions will be more profitable and enjoyable after the ice has been broken.

The papers on Monday and Tuesday will deal equally with problems of art, science and history museums. One session will be given up to representatives of other national organizations in order that museum workers may hear new points of view and have an opportunity of seeing museum work in relation to other national movements.

## NEW EDITION OF DIRECTORY

A second edition of *Museums of the United States* is now available. Copies may be secured from Headquarters for twenty-five cents each. The list was first published in *MUSEUM WORK* for March-April, 1923.

This is the most complete directory of museums in print, though it does not aim to supersede the descriptive *DIRECTORY OF AMERICAN MUSEUMS* which was compiled by former Secretary Rea more than ten years ago.

The preparation of a new loose-leaf directory which may be kept up to date, is one of the projects now in contemplation.

## FIELD MUSEUM STUDIES MUMMIES WITH X-RAY

METHOD SAVES MATERIAL FOR  
STUDY

A series of X-ray experiments at The Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, is bringing to light discoveries of vast scientific importance. For the first time in America mummies have been X-rayed.

The investigations at the Museum, which were begun in December, will be continued for three months at least and will be extended to various departments. A group of Peruvian mummy packs from the Necropolis of Ancon, collected for the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, and since in the possession of the Museum, were the first specimens to be X-rayed. If they had been unwrapped to learn whether they contained objects of special interest they would have been destroyed for exhibition purposes. It is now possible to ascertain what has been buried with the body, determining beforehand whether it be advisable to unwrap the bundles.

The Peruvian mummy packs thus far examined are shown to include ears of corn, pottery, vessels of clay containing shells, bits of metal, gourd vessels, beads, clay figurines, cut bone objects—or in some instances nothing. Something definite also is learned from the X-ray photographs of the age, sex, and condition of the body structure of the mummified body.

Mummified cats, hawks, jackals, crocodiles, gazelles, and one mummy of a man of the 26th dynasty, about 600 B. C., have been photographed successfully in the Egyptian collections. The mummy of a man of the 26th dynasty was X-rayed in five sections, beginning at the head, and a wonderfully clear picture of the entire skeleton has been obtained. Even the tail feathers are distinctly seen in the picture of a mummified hawk. The X-ray of the mummy of a jackal, which was wrapped with great care, shows it to contain slight traces of the bony structure of that animal, while the textile material within is in a condition which indicates that it never had been disturbed since its wrappings

(Continued on fourth page)



## THE MUSEUM NEWS

Published twice a month by  
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HEADQUARTERS AT THE  
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WASHINGTON, D. C.

LAURENCE VAIL COLEMAN - - Editor

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## HUMAN INTEREST TO SHAPE EXHIBITS OF FUTURE

"The museum of the future will give more attention to subjects which affect intimately the life and interests of the people. An exhibit of minerals has its usefulness, but one of public health or Americanization is vastly more important," said Hermon Carey Bumpus, of Brown University, to members of the Association gathered during the New England Conference, at the Providence Art Club on December 6.

Dr. Bumpus, formerly Director of The American Museum of Natural History, reviewed progress of museums up to the present, and indicated his belief that the increased interest of museums in the common affairs of man, evidenced, in part, by the disappearance of the technical label and the abandonment of strict scientific arrangement of exhibits, would be projected into the future with salutary results. He went on to say that great throngs of people visited the tuberculosis exhibit which was held in New York City some years ago, because the subject touched their daily lives, and he commented on the great misfortune that public health, for example, is so slenderly represented in museums. The differentiation which has now come to be recognized between study collections and display material, will be carried still further and some day will demark those aspects of a subject which are for the student from those which are of interest and value to the general public.

In discussing the evolution of museums during the past few decades, Dr. Bumpus drew attention to the fact that the majority of explorers are now representatives of museums, whereas at one time they were attached to colleges and various other educational institutions.

## CLEVELAND TO EXPLORE BY PROXY

According to an announcement of The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, every Clevelander may keep closely in touch with the voyage of the *Blossom* which set sail recently for a three-year trip to the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. This is a new page in the annals of museum exploration.

"Hundreds of people," says the announcement, "want to go on the Museum's South Atlantic Expedition. The next best thing is to follow, by radiogram, the sixteen men who are aboard the *Blossom*."

"The voyage of the *Blossom* begins a new epoch in the history of Cleveland. It is the first great exploring expedition sent out as a community enterprise. The Museum itself is a civic institution in which every citizen should be a partner. Its expeditions afford a fascinating opportunity for every family in Cleveland to participate by proxy in their adventures and scientific discoveries. Then, when the collections are finally exhibited in the Museum, we may all have a personal knowledge of where and how they were obtained."

After sketching some of the allurements of the trip, the statement continues: "The Museum has arranged a special service to members who wish to follow closely the voyage of the *Blossom*. Your whole family may share her experiences and gain an intimate knowledge of the geography of the least known parts of the world. The plan is to send to subscribers, at cost, a map for plotting the course of the *Blossom* and by direct mail service every radiogram received by the Museum."

The service is started by offering a large map, post paid, for fifty cents, and copies of radiograms for twenty cents each.

## MUSEUM SUGGESTS GIFTS

Just before Christmas a booklet was published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, with the title *Christmas Gifts, Suggestions and Hints*.

"Reproductions, Colour Prints, Etchings and Woodblock Prints, Books, Casts, the Museum Calendar—good things in good taste—make inexpensive presents," reads the introductory note.

"The Museum sells all of these, some of the pictures framed in attractive styles, and you will find them displayed to great advantage at the Information Desk at the Fifth Avenue Entrance; or if you prefer, it can send what you wish to you or your friends."

## CITIZENSHIP CON- FERENCE AT CHICAGO

Representatives of twenty-one organizations interested in Americanization and citizenship-training presented reports of their work to the morning session of a Conference on Citizenship held at the Chicago Historical Society on December 8. A luncheon and a tea in the afternoon were devoted to round-table discussions. General subjects were treated during the afternoon in a program of papers.

Speaking for the Chicago Historical Society, Caroline M. McIlvaine said in part: "Historical societies used to be storage houses. Now they are becoming storage batteries. The ultimate objective of every American historical society, whether it knows it or not, is the making of better Americans."

"The means to this end are the cultivation of love of country through intimate acquaintance with the steps and stages of the civilization peculiar to the land. By visibly demonstrating the continuity and the perpetuity of those things which are worthy, life is dignified, enriched, happified and the sense of responsibility for the maintenance of these things is developed. Then we have good citizens."

The purpose of the Conference was to bring about better coordination between the social forces of Chicago. It was carried out under the auspices of the Women's Auxiliary Board of the Chicago Historical Society.

## RICHARDS VISITS MUSEUMS UNDER DIFFICULTIES

Director Richards, who is now completing his field studies of museums in Europe, is having some experiences in Germany. His last letter written from Munich on November 24, tells of one interruption:

"The day after I wrote you last was the day of the Hitler Putsch here. We were told in the morning that von Kahr's government had been overthrown, that von Kahr had acquiesced and that all was over. Everything certainly seemed peaceful and quiet and I betook myself to the Residenz Museum. At 12:30 just as I was getting my things from the cloak-room, shouts and rifle volleys sounded outside and the big bronze doors went to with a clang. For three-quarters of an hour I sat on the stairs listening to the noise outside and thinking what an admirable custom it was to build such good thick doors to the old palaces."

Director Richards reports having collected splendid photographs.



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## EXCHANGES

Museums are offered the privilege of announcing their needs in *THE MUSEUM NEWS*. In this way a department of exchanges will be developed which will be at the disposal of all who wish to use it as long as space will permit.

### BEAR SKINS WANTED

The Kent Scientific Museum of Grand Rapids, Michigan, desires to secure material for a black bear group which will include the female, two quarter grown cubs and, if possible, also the male.

### MUSEUM JARS TO BE MADE

The manufacturers of rectangular glass museum jars may be induced to make up special lots for museum uses if museums will pool their orders through the Association. The dearth of jars has been a serious embarrassment to a number of directors.

### PUBLICATIONS WANTED

MUSEUM WORK for November, 1919—Volume 2, number 2—is out of print. Members who can supply copies of this number are requested to communicate with the Secretary.

## PERSONNEL

### POSITION OFFERED

31. Large science museum wants osteologist.

### WOMEN SEEKING POSITIONS

32. Young woman, graduate of the Columbia School of Architecture, 1917. Three years academic work at Bryn Mawr, one year in Greece specializing in the study of Greek archaeology; especially interested in Byzantine and mediaeval objects. Experience in architects' office. Desires position where she may continue archaeological work.

33. Woman with some experience in historical societies and with knowledge of old furniture, china and linen. Interested in any opening.

34. Experienced art museum worker with university art education. Experienced also as teacher. Desires responsible position in art museum.

35. Woman with experience in general library work, formerly in charge of art department of Boston Athenaeum. Interested in position as art reference librarian.

### MEN SEEKING POSITIONS

36. Middle aged man with a great deal of experience as field worker in ornithology and bird photography. Has supplied many slides for lecturers and has won high recognition. At present teaching in Canada. Anxious to secure a position in United States as a field worker in ornithology and bird photography.

37. Bird taxidermist with long museum experience desires position with prospects of advancement.

38. Young man with degree of B.S. from Washington and Lee University. Instructor in biology. Experienced in field and economic ornithology and also in bird photography. Two summers Assistant Biologist with the Food Habits Research, Washington, D. C. Desires field work in some branch of ornithology, would consider collecting in Arctic regions, preferably Alaska.

39. Experienced ornithologist. Trained at Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science. Interested in a position as museum assistant or field worker.

40. Man with good general experience in museum work in England; author and naturalist. Desires curatorial position in science museum in United States or Canada.

41. Field worker in ornithology. Ten years of experience.

42. Man of middle age with professional experience who has followed ornithology as a hobby. Organizer of Bird Clubs. Interested in any opening as field worker in ornithology.

## MUSEUMS SPEND MILLIONS

They erect buildings which must be maintained. They employ clerks who use office supplies. They buy books. They operate laboratories which must be equipped. They purchase works of art and materials of science. They insure.

If you want to sell to  
museums advertise in  
**THE MUSEUM NEWS**

## GET THEIR BUSINESS

43. Young man interested in all branches of Natural History and has knowledge of classifications of birds. Interested in any position.

44. Young man, well educated in art, music and literature. Has had year of study in Europe. Linguist. Wishes position in museum within commuting distance from New York City.

45. Graduate of Yale. One year teaching experience. Interested in museum work. Willing to start at the bottom.

46. Young man graduating from University of Illinois in June. Majoring in zoology. Anxious to work in ornithology and willing to work up from bottom. Would like to join scientific exposition.

47. Young man desires position as osteological and palaeontological preparator. Is not afraid of work.

48. Anatomical laboratory technician, excellent experience including work in gross pathology at Army Medical Museum. Interested in medical museum position in civilian life.

49. Specialists in Hymenoptera now in agricultural station work. Interested in museum work in entomology.



## NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

*(Continued from first page)*

outdoor living museum of the American Indian.

The Conference was carried out as usual under the auspices of the Committee on Sectional Meetings, of which Delia I. Griffin is Chairman. The Providence members, Marie E. Gaudette and Mr. and Mrs. L. Earle Rowe, made the local plans and presided over the sessions. Mr. and Mrs. Rowe also entertained at their home on Friday evening.

## NEW ENGLAND SECTION INVITED TO NEW HAVEN IN 1925

The dedication of the new Peabody Museum of Natural History in 1925 may be expected to occasion a gathering of museum people. An invitation has been recorded by the Secretary of the Association and referred to the Committee on Sectional Meetings.

The invitation, which is from Robert Maynard Hutchins, Secretary of Yale University, reads as follows:

"On behalf of the President and Fellows of Yale University and the Curators of the Peabody Museum, I have the honor to invite The American Association of Museums, New England Section, through you, to hold its annual meeting in New Haven during the Christmas recess, 1925, at which time the Peabody Museum, which is now under construction, will be dedicated. The other learned societies in the fields related to the activities of the Museum will also be invited to be present."

## MUMMIES STUDIED WITH X-RAY

*(Continued from first page)*

had been placed in position. In the case of the mummy of one cat, exactly the opposite was revealed.

Further investigations will be made on this class of material as well as on vessels of marble, alabaster, and metal. It is also intended to X-ray a rock formation 3,000 years old. These experiments doubtless will open an entirely new and important field of operations in the scientific world.

## PANAMA PACIFIC MODEL ON SALE

An elaborate model of the Panama Pacific Exposition of 1915, made by Alfred Lee of San Francisco, has been placed on the market. The price asked is \$50,000. The model covers an area of seven by twelve feet, weighs eight hundred pounds and is wired for either night or day illumination.

## TUDOR ROOM OPENED AT MINNEAPOLIS

A Tudor room has just been opened at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. It is dedicated to the memory of the late John Washburn and is the most complete and representative example of its epoch.

The room measures about twenty-one by twenty-three feet and is panelled in oak to a height of nine feet. It might have belonged to a well-to-do squire of the late Tudor period. One of the most striking features of the room is a large verdure tapestry.

The program of the Institute for period rooms is completed by this installation.

## COMMITTEE ON FIRE HAZARDS COMPLETED

The Committee on Fire Hazards has now been rounded out as follows: Edward R. Hardy of the New York Fire Insurance Exchange, Chairman, Harry F. Beers of The American Museum of Natural History, Laura M. Bragg of The Charleston Museum, Junius Henderson of the University of Colorado and L. Earle Rowe of the Rhode Island School of Design.

The preliminary work of the Committee has been going forward for some time.

## COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP PLANNED

Repeatedly the suggestion has been made that members of the museum profession ought to agree to extend to each other the hospitality of their respective institutions. Of course this is done whenever the visitor is recognized, but a letter from a museum director shows another side of the case.

He writes: "As you know, many museums charge an admission fee on one or more days a week. In Chicago last summer I had to pay 25c to get into each of two museums in a single day, although I am myself in the museum business. This is a trivial matter but it is annoying. Has it ever occurred to you to try to promote a reciprocal arrangement by which a membership ticket in one museum might admit to every other museum in the country—or perhaps the privilege might be extended only to those who are members of the Association.

"The back of my Y. M. C. A. membership ticket states that 'This Ticket will also be honored, and the holder cordially welcomed, by any Young Men's Christian Association in the United States or Canada.'"

Since the membership of the Asso-

## THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

HEADQUARTERS AT THE  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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*The object of this Association shall be to promote the welfare of Museums, to increase and diffuse knowledge of all matters relating to them, and to encourage helpful relations among Museums and those interested in them.*

ciation should include most members of the profession, efforts will be made to carry out the latter suggestion at this time. Δ



# Some Things Never Change

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Laurie E. Wertz

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When it comes to museums and money, just about the only thing that has changed remarkably through the decades are hotel rates at AAM annual meetings. Visitors to the 1924 meeting in Washington, D. C., paid \$3 a night for a single room, without bath, at the fashionable Willard Hotel. Those wishing a bath paid \$5.

A look through old issues of *MUSEUM NEWS* reveals the perennial problem of funding for museums. The news of gifts, grants, loans, drives and pleas revolved around the same theme in 1924 as it did in 1944, 1954 and 1964: there is never enough. There are, however, discernible trends in the history of museum funding in America. Here is an overview of museum monetary triumphs and troubles as seen by *MUSEUM NEWS*, from the 1920s to the 1960s.

American museums participated a bit in the country's overall prosperity during the 1920s, thanks to the generous gifts and bequests of a small number of wealthy individuals. These patrons had a personal interest in the arts. Having earned their fortunes in earlier decades, they shared their riches with the cultural community by creating new museums and building the collections, staffs and endowments of existing museums.

Announcements of gifts and bequests appeared in nearly every issue of *MUSEUM NEWS* in its early years. Some of the news, however, was weightier than others. In 1925 John D. Rockefeller, Jr., gave a gift of Standard Oil stock worth \$1 million to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. One year later, the Metropolitan fell heir to a large bequest from Frank A. Munsey. "The sum is estimated to be between \$20,000,000

and \$40,000,000" reported *MUSEUM NEWS* on January 15, 1926. Its income alone "would more than double the total expenditure of the Museum. . . . The bequest is the largest ever entrusted to any art museum." About the same time, Edward Drummond Libbey of Toledo bequeathed a total of \$20,200,000 to the Toledo Museum of Art.

City appropriations provided for a smaller portion of museum income during the 1920s. The following item, which appeared on October 15, 1924, is noteworthy:

On September 27 the City Council of Baltimore voted to submit to the people at the November election a million dollar loan for a municipal museum of art. . . . The Mayor, while he is in sympathy with the museum movement, has been inclined to postpone the referendum lest submission to the people at this time should jeopardize certain other large loans for sewers, pavements, etc. . . . It is estimated that were a municipal art museum in keeping with the dignity and traditions of the city to be erected at the full sum called for by the loan, the cost to the individual taxpayer would be negligible. A man owning a house assessed at \$5,000 would have to put up thirty-nine cents for the new Museum.

The referendum for the million dollar loan passed, and three years later the city laid the cornerstone of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Such triumphs of public financing were rare, however. Private gifts—whether large contributions, be-

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—Nov. 1, 1924

## LEAVES MILLIONS FOR MUSEUM OF PEACEFUL ARTS

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quests or single membership dues—constituted the overwhelming proportion of museum income. This is not to paint a picture of great prosperity, however. Alongside the news of generous gifts appeared items about shrinking endowments, rising costs and politely urgent pleas for funds:

An appeal for an additional endowment of ten million dollars for The American Museum of Natural History was made by President Henry Fairfield Osborn before the board of trustees. . . . Dr. Osborn explained that administrative and operating costs had risen out of all proportion to the increase in the budget. . . . The cost of running the Museum, President Osborn stated, has risen 120 per cent in the last decade.

That appeal, dated January 15, 1926, has an unmistakably familiar ring. Or consider this one, made two weeks earlier.

The regents of the Smithsonian Institution . . . are making an appeal to the American people for

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LAURIE E. WERTZ is editorial assistant on the AAM publications staff.



\$10,000,000 to be added to the Institution's endowment for fundamental scientific research and publication. "Since its foundation in 1846 the Smithsonian's initial endowment has only doubled," the regents say, "and its annual income of \$65,000 has been for years inadequate to maintain its many and varied investigations and publications." . . . Although the Smithsonian Institution has never before called on the public for funds, it has frequently been the beneficiary of gifts from private individuals.

A MUSEUM NEWS editorial on September 1, 1926, acknowledged the good fortune that fell to museums

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—June 1, 1924

### **ANONYMOUS FUND SUBSCRIBED FOR HOUSTON MUSEUM**

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during the decade, but also warned recipients to use their gifts wisely.

Scarcely a fortnight is without its news of a huge gift to some museum. Within a few years museums have doubled their collective plant investment and multiplied their total endowment many times. . . . Though it is tempting to rejoice blindly in the visible gain, it is

expedient also to enquire whether the increase of investment is yielding a proportionate or a diminishing return. The most pressing need in the museum world is thought, which may be expressed by improved practice. There is wide appreciation of museums and generous support for them, but the tide of favor will not continue to flow in of its own momentum.

That tide of favor did, however, continue to flow for a while, even on into the Depression. A survey conducted by John Price Jones examined gifts to 14 U. S. museums from 1920 to 1938. The results, published in MUSEUM NEWS, showed that the museums received gifts totaling \$47,445,735 over the 18 years. The peak year was 1930 (\$10,014,453) and the low point was 1933 (\$925,365)—an obvious reflection of the Depression. Surprisingly, the Jones survey also revealed that the 14 museums studied received more in gifts during the 1930s than they did during the decade of the 1920s. From 1920 to 1929 they received \$22,664,534 in gifts; for 1930-38 the figure was \$24,781,201.

Still, the Depression affected museums through decreased memberships, deflating endowments and cuts in municipal appropriations. Federal projects alleviated some of the troubles. Under emergency relief programs, museums received aid, mostly for capital purposes (building and repairs) and personnel re-



*Smithsonian Institution regents' meeting, December 1926*

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—Oct. 1, 1924

### **SEEKS FUND TO EXPEDITE WORK OF PREPARATION**

**AMERICAN MUSEUM WOULD OPEN  
NEW HALLS DURING 1925**

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—Jan. 1, 1926

**DENVER ASKS INCREASED CITY  
MAINTENANCE APPROPRIATION**

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—Dec. 15, 1933

**FEDERAL FUNDS AVAILABLE  
TO MUSEUMS IN NEW WAYS**

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—Jan. 1, 1941

**FOURTEEN MUSEUMS GET  
\$47,445,735 IN GIFTS  
IN NINETEEN YEARS**

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lief. MUSEUM NEWS reported on December 15, 1933:

Under the Civil Works Administration, museums can carry out projects or catch up back work in arranging and cataloguing material, collating records, improving libraries, listing materials for exchange, organizing and caring for collections, and rearranging exhibits. . . . It will not be permissible, in contrast, to use aid provided by the CWA for the opening of buildings closed for lack of funds.

The lean years proved to be somewhat of a turning point for museums. While private contributions could be counted on, to a certain extent, no matter how bad things became, museums were forced to seek new sources of support. The 1926 editorial hinted at the need for museums to earn broader appreciation through improved practice. MUSEUM NEWS essayists of the 1930s, however, dared to declare the end of generous benefaction and urged museums to cultivate a more democratic, mass appeal. In retrospect, the entire decade emerges as one of transition, as museums began to move away from the "elitist" image—museums as "private" collections of wealthy patrons—toward a more public image—museums as multi-purpose, educational institutions for the general public. MUSEUM NEWS articles document the trend's germination. Philip Youtz, assistant director of the Brooklyn Museum, wrote on September 15, 1933:

Any institution asking the public to continue its support through a depression period must be ready to prove, not only that it merits support, but that its support is in line with a policy of economy. There are many indications that the day of the great private fortunes is coming to an end and with its passing will go the race of public benefactors who have been so largely responsible for the founding of museums. It is probable that, like the school and the library, the museum of the future will cease to be a privately supported institution and become dependent on municipal and state subsidies.

Perhaps the most important development of the decade was the proliferation of museum education

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—Jan. 15, 1943

#### WAR DAMAGE INSURANCE RATES LOWERED

programs in the form of classes, expanded docent services, publications, radio broadcasts and exhibition loans. Edmund Cooke, assistant in charge of the Department of Education at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, wrote on June 15, 1934:

Practically without exception today museums are endeavoring to make their influence felt in the great public task of education. . . . Where once practically the only educational service of museums was docent work, there are now nearly two score activities offered by

various institutions. . . . In the middle of the last century when the issue of public education was being fought in this country, opponents of the measure raised the cry of Socialism and argued that one man should not be taxed to pay for educating another man's children. Today, with respect to museums, the situation is more than parallel—with this difference, that there is no issue made of it. The philanthropically inclined who have been supporting museums, have been testing themselves to pay for the museum's educational services to other men's children. But as these services have grown and as their importance in the education scheme has become recognized, the work has reached proportions where it has obviously become a public charge. The result has been that not only have there been established municipal museums and school museums, expressly dedicated to public education; but many private institutions have made terms with the tax dollar.

The public services of museums continued to expand during the wartime era of the 1940s. On October 1, 1944, Francis Henry Taylor, director of the

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—Dec. 15, 1947

#### CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS GROW IN NUMBER AND QUARTERS

Metropolitan Museum of Art, offered his version of American museums' "state of mind":

The depression has brought an even greater change throughout the country than the war itself which was, of course, its inevitable result. Socially, during the period of the past fifteen years the country has jumped ahead almost a century in its thinking. . . . There has developed a much greater public demand for an expansion of every type of public service, but there has also been a much greater use of those institutions which already existed. . . . Our museums represent an aggregate annual purchasing power which is fully equivalent to that represented by the private collectors of the past generations. There is, also, being built up a body of well trained young men and women who are devoting their lives to study and connoisseurship. Therefore, the new market for antiques and works of art in postwar America will be determined by the taste and discrimination of those responsible for public trust funds rather than by men of large private means.

The postwar period was indeed a time of growth, as the number of museums multiplied along with the variety of museum services and bases of financial support. More museums were receiving funds through state and city appropriations, federal assistance, and grants from foundations and corporations, although these sources still accounted for only a small percentage of total museum income. Gifts from members and organizations and endowments remained the primary sources of museum funding.

As possibilities for new funds broadened, MUSEUM



NEWS writers never tired of the subject. On December 1, 1944, Fiske Kimball, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, urged museums to work together, to seek funds from public sources collectively rather than individually. He envisioned cultural and educational institutions merging their appeals to form cultural community chests—"a single broadly humanitarian campaign."

Four years later, on November 1, 1948, Bruno Gebhard, director of the Cleveland Health Museum, expressed the same thought and offered other strategies for raising money:

I am a great believer in the "free enterprise system," but I also know that the days of every man—or every institution—for himself are over. . . . Industry and business as a group has become educated to contribute to Community Chest and Health drives, but in comparison has contributed little to science museums. This is largely the fault of museum people themselves. In this country money is available, but museum people have not "sold" the advantages of their museums. . . . Museums are organizations incorporated not for profit, but that does not mean they cannot earn some of the money they require. This can be done through sales of publications, consultant services, tuition fees, and many other forms of services rendered.

Gebhard's museum, as an example, raised funds by organizing workshop facilities and exhibits for other community groups.

During the 1950s MUSEUM NEWS began publishing more detailed information from financial surveys that were themselves testimony to the growing complexity of museum funding. One published on May

—Oct. 15, 1956

#### TELEVISION FOR MUSEUMS BY CBS AND AAM

15, 1954, revealed that for 102 museums city support had increased by two-thirds between 1939 and 1954 and had "probably" doubled between 1944 and 1954. In the fiscal year ending 1953, the 102 museums surveyed had a total operating income of \$17,048,168. City support provided \$8,400,000, or nearly half of that amount. "Individual cases differed widely," according to the report, "from almost negligible city support to entire support by the city, which latter condition commonly goes with city control."

MUSEUM NEWS also examined how museums spent money. On October 1 of the same year a salary survey revealed that 19 museums spent an average of 73 percent of their total 1954 operating budget on salaries. The report detailed average salaries for various museum positions in three categories of institutions based on annual budget.

A = museums with annual operating budgets of	\$300,000-800,000
B = museums with annual operating budgets of	\$150,000-300,000
C = museums with annual operating budgets of	\$ 50,000-150,000

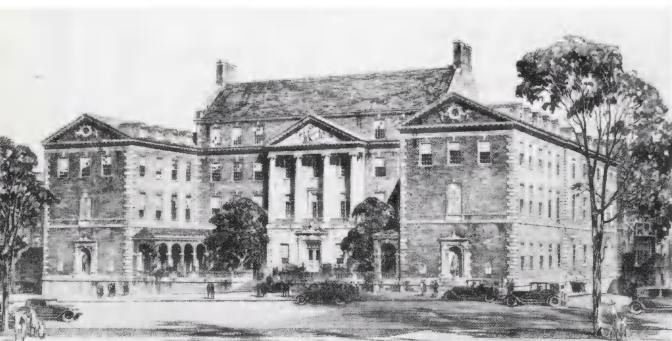
<i>Position</i>	<i>Average annual salary</i>	
<b>Director</b>	A . . . . .	\$12,028
	B . . . . .	9,289
	C . . . . .	9,202
<b>Head Curator/ Head of Public Information</b>	A . . . . .	7,581
	B . . . . .	6,769
	C . . . . .	4,880
<b>Registrar</b>	A . . . . .	4,457
	B . . . . .	3,480
	C . . . . .	3,228
<b>Director of Development</b>	A . . . . .	6,965
	B . . . . .	5,679
	C . . . . .	5,038
<b>Research Assistant</b>	A . . . . .	3,456
	B . . . . .	2,348
	C . . . . .	(none reported)

A year later, on November 15, 1955, MUSEUM NEWS published a similar study on museum operating and staff costs, using data from 51 community museums with annual incomes ranging from \$10,000 to over \$700,000. The researchers concluded that most museums in 1955 spent roughly \$5,600 a year in operating costs for every full-time staff member, allocated roughly two-thirds of their annual operating budgets to payroll and paid an average staff salary of \$3,500 a year. Apparently the problem of low salaries in the museum field has been as unrelenting as the concern about museum income.

By the mid-1960s the 4,000 museums in America relied on a mixture of income sources: private gifts and endowments, state and local government appropriations, museum memberships, publications, sales desks and special services. At the bottom of the list were private foundations, corporations and the federal government. In the course of the 20th century, museums had become more popularized, and the sources of funding shifted. Few museums in 1925 earned money through gift shops, just as few received astronomical bequests from private citizens in 1960. In the decades to come, the sources of museum funding, and the roles that museums play in our lives, would shift and broaden again.

One truth has remained constant, however: when it comes to money, museums never seem to have enough. Through all of the decades of MUSEUM NEWS, from the quiet, understated accounts of museums' "good fortunes" to the urgent calls for emergency funds, only the names have changed. Δ





1928 line drawing of the Museum of the City of New York, New York, Joseph H. Freedlander, 1932

Right: 1928 sketch of Master Building, New York, New York, Harvey Wiley Corbett, 1929



Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Louis I. Kahn, 1972

## Finances and Foundations

# The Monuments of Half a Century

Migs Grove

America's infatuation with museums and the facilities that house their collections is not a phenomenon of the last 10 to 15 years. In fact, if the past 60 years of MUSEUM NEWS are any indication, museums and their buildings have been the apple of the public's eye consistently, if sometimes quietly.

The first evidence of a special interest in museums came in response to an announcement sent out by the AAM on November 17, 1923, that "the Association would render assistance to individuals or groups plan-

ning seriously to establish museums." Hundreds requested help; newspapers carried headlines like "Here's Chance to Gain Fame; Open Museum"; communities debated "Should Our City Have a Museum?" The call went forth, communities "agitated" for museums; and when the decade closed there were 1,200 museums in the country. The pace of growth has not declined. According to "Building for the Future" (December 1963), "there are 5,000 museums which are known to exist in the United States and Canada. And the rate of growth is increasing daily." The latest edition of the *Official Museum Directory* records 6,000.

Many museums of the 1920s were established as memorials. It was not uncommon for leading citizens to bequeath their estates, private collections or fortunes (or any combination of the above) to the community to establish a museum in their names. Often the structures were classic, palatial, reminiscent of an era when art was the province of kings. But the march of democracy was pressing, in this country, even on the very rich. The evolution of the museum from a personal monument to a trustee of the public's heritage is chronicled in MUSEUM NEWS, July 1, 1924:

The need of a new "art laboratory" [Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University] is acute. . . . The rapid increase in the number of art museums and the increasing volume of art treasures coming to America and requiring expert knowledge for their care, has created a demand for trained men far exceeding the supply.

It is not believed that Seattle will permit this material [displaced collection of State Museum, University of Washington], some of which can never be replaced, to be

MIGS GROVE is associate editor on the AAM publications staff.



lost to the city at a time when the value to communities of museum collections is so widely emphasized.

Recognition of museum collections as public responsibilities was soon reflected in the design of new museum structures, or "museum architecture." Additions not only increased gallery space, but incorporated auditoriums, classrooms and concert halls that would serve the community. Reporting on December 1, 1926, about a new auditorium at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, *MUSEUM NEWS* observed that because the auditorium "is segregated from the museum galleries it can be rented to outside organizations." Seven months earlier Rhode Island School of Design announced that its new Museum of Art embodied an extraordinary number of mechanical features and service devices in keeping with the purposes of the museum. "Museum authorities present expressed themselves as regarding it as the latest word in museum design and structure," said *MUSEUM NEWS*.

During the 1920s new museum facilities still favored the classical styles—Renaissance, Georgian, Federal—and expansion naturally continued the style of the existing building. Architectural harmony was very important and was always considered before plans were approved. On October 25, 1925, *MUSEUM NEWS* reported that the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago would be "of marble, . . . designed to compose well with its neighbors, the new Field Museum and the Art Institute, completing a notable triad of visual education institutions."

The tide was turning, however. In 1929 one enterprising individual, Nicholas Roerich, challenged the old order and commissioned architect Harvey Wiley Corbett to design a 24-story skyscraper to house a museum and its affiliated activities, and *apartments*. The Master Building, as it was known, was opened October 17, 1929, at 310 Riverside Drive in New York City.

It was not until 1934, however, that a full departure from architectural convention was realized. The first addition that incorporated what *MUSEUM NEWS*, on February 1, described as "modern design," was the Avery Memorial Museum of the Wadsworth Athe-

*Court of the Avery Memorial, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, Benjamin Wistar Morris and Robert T. O'Connor, 1934*

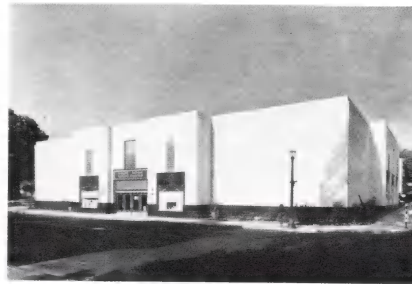


neum, which included the Morgan Memorial Museum. Designed by Morris & O'Connor of New York,

the exterior design, in limestone and bronze, harmonizes with that of the pseudo-classical Morgan Memorial; the interior design is modern, the purpose being to give maximum space for housing and exhibition, efficient lighting, and convenient arrangement. . . . Special features of the building are the two tiers of galleries at the second and third floors, suspended on the cantilever principle over the central court, and provision for lighting these galleries from the court skylight by making the top quarter of the gallery walls of glass.

To avoid too great a contrast to the new Avery Memorial, the interior of the Morgan Memorial was completely renovated.

With the advent of modern design came a reanalysis of a museum's function that focused on the building's design as well as its collections. One such dis-



*Grand Rapids Public Museum, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Roger Allen, 1940*

course by Philip Youtz, AIA, and then director of the Brooklyn Museum, appeared in the magazine section of *MUSEUM NEWS* on December 1, 1937:

To be understood a work of architecture must be considered not as an example of art for art's sake but as the material form of a social institution. . . . The starting point of any discussion of museum architecture must be careful consideration of the nature of the museum as an institution. . . . A museum is not a monument for a public park . . . mausoleum for the exhibition in perpetuity of private memorials . . . private club for wealthy collections . . . art school [or] warehouse.

The museum requires a highly specialized type of architecture in order to fulfill the function of exhibiting objects to the public. Few museum buildings in America are adapted to their purpose. As a result most museum architecture is actually more of a handicap than an asset to the institution it is supposed to serve. . . . Left to their own devices the architects produce monuments which record in perpetuity our entire ignorance of the aims of the institutions we direct.

Youtz's building code for future museums encompassed many of the components of "modern design":

- Museum sites should offer the optimum exposure to the public. Youtz predicted museums would one day have window displays to excite the curiosity of passersby.
- The interior construction should be made of curtain





*Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, Eliel Saarinen, 1936*

walls and partitions to be as flexible as possible.

- The interiors are background for exhibitions and should be free of architectural ornament or design (like niches, pilasters, cornices, vaulted coffered ceilings) that destroys the usefulness and vitality of a museum building.
- Visitors should progress from one hall to another in a consecutive sequence without being consciously aware of moving through the building.
- To minimize the chance for museum fatigue important galleries should be placed on the ground floor near the entrance hall.

With such guidelines the architectural structure began to reflect the museum's function.

Despite all logic, museums continued to flourish during the Depression. Reflected *MUSEUM NEWS* in June 1961:

For all states, the greatest growth came after 1932 and before 1940. Those were the depression years when the government was active in state projects, which included buildings.

Government support may have played a part, as may increased leisure.

Modern and classical styled museum buildings and wings continued to abound until America's involvement in World War II curtailed building activity.

No matter which style of architecture was selected, museums prior to World War II engaged in a form of planned expansion. They were considered as growing organisms, not finite forms. To this end museums throughout prewar era built their facilities (and collections) in "units"; each unit was constructed as funds were raised. Although this trend did not die out entirely, it was not nearly as prevalent after World War II.

The first museum to be opened after the war was the Des Moines Art Center designed by Eliel Saarinen. It was not until 1959, however, when the unorthodox spiral design of the Guggenheim was christened, that museum architecture was once again wholly in the public's eye. From raised eyebrows to stirring words of praise, the Guggenheim seldom failed to elicit a response. In January 1960 *MUSEUM NEWS* carried some reactions to the radically contemporary building.

In every aspect of architecture, except as an abstract composition in interior space, one's final judgment must, then, be a sadly unfavorable one. . . . the building as a whole fails as a work of architecture.

—Lewis Mumford

. . . the building he produced . . . turns out to be an extremely effective place for the display of pictures.

—Alfred Frankenstein

The result [arrangement of paintings] is an extraordinarily airy and spacious installation in which the paintings seem totally removed from the powerful architecture that surrounds them, and are given a chance to speak clearly for themselves.

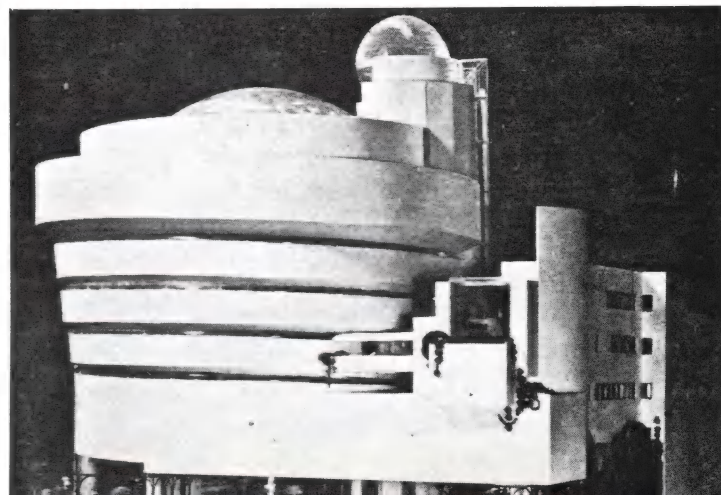
To glorify and dramatize art—that certainly has been one of the chief functions of a good museum ever since museums were first built.

—Peter Blake

Perhaps the most notable feature about the innovation of the Guggenheim is its place as the next evolutionary step in museum architecture: its balance between form and function. Which has greater import? Is the building a neutral shell, or the largest artifact in the collection? There are some who believe the actual structure should be nothing more than a vessel in which to house and display works of art, industrial innovations and the like. Others, like Douglas Davis (*MUSEUM NEWS*, June 1983), think that any museum that pretends to offer repose and contemplation should be *removed*. "Who desires this end? If the American Museum once sought removal—and that's debatable—it no longer does. . . . [it] tries to seduce and gratify as many publics as it can." No matter what one's opinion is, few would disagree with Philip Johnson's assessment that the "museum has now become a civic necessity, a shrine for the people" (*MUSEUM NEWS*, January 1960).

Where this debate will end is uncertain. However, we might well be reminded of Davis' words in "The Museum Impossible": "Like war, the American museum is impossible to wage, or design. A recognition of this truth is essential to any discussion or evaluation of the museum-as-architecture." Δ

*1945 model of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1959*





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60 YEARS OF MUSEUM NEWS

# Glimpses of the Large Cause



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## The Early 1960s

No one could have predicted in 1962 that more than 1,000 museums would be founded during the decade just begun. But August Heckscher and Edgar Preston Richardson, both speaking at AAM annual meetings, heartily urged a strong commitment to the "great enterprise" of museums.

The visionary fervor of the Kennedy years spread to museums, too. MUSEUM NEWS during the first half of the 1960s carried articles about a wide array of public programs, as well as early consideration of the development of professional standards and ethics. It was no accident that this move toward greater accountability came at the same time as the first large infusions of federal support for museums.



# Museums in a New Age

August Heckscher

*In 1962 government commitment to museums was still a fledgling notion, as President Kennedy's special advisor on the arts, August Heckscher, told the 57th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Museums in Williamsburg, Virginia. There are familiar themes here—the need for a diverse base of financial support for museums, the growing public demand for museum programs, the absence of quantitative information about American museums. Twenty years later*

*museums in this country enjoy a public-private partnership of financial support. As a more closely knit community of museums has developed, there has been a gradual but serious effort to, as Heckscher urged, "raise [cultural institutions'] sights, acknowledge the importance of their role and make plans adequate to the needs of society."*

*August Heckscher is a journalist and author who served as art commissioner for the city of New York from 1957 to 1962. His most recent book was *St. Paul's: The Life of a New England School*, and he is currently working on a biography of Woodrow Wilson. He lives in New York City.*



Visitors to Colonial Williamsburg in the late 1950s enjoy a favorite tourist pastime—photographing “prisoners” locked in the pillory.

**I**t is a novel thing for us that government should candidly express a serious concern with the progress of the arts in America. And yet, in doing so, it returns to a very old tradition. The statesmen of the classic age of our republic, the men who established its constitutions and marked out the first pathways for its growth, were conscious of an affinity between the forms of art, the shape and character of outward things, and those inner ideals by which they set the young nation's course. Coming again to Wil-

liamsburg, it is impossible not to be aware of the link between architecture and public life. Do you not feel here a conscious effort to make visible in outward forms the belief in decency and justice and order that marked the political leaders of the 18th-century world? The scale of the place is fitted to man. The public buildings stand out—“clearly seen and heroic,” yet not dominating or oppressing the beautiful private dwellings that cluster around. The university and the capitol face each other at opposite ends of the



street, which makes an easy walk in all weathers; and moving along it one comes suddenly upon the handsome vista of the governor's mansion—the source of power, somewhat concealed and withdrawn, yet in those days still giving ultimate shape to men's affairs.

The early sense of a connection between government and the arts we lost as we set out on the grand errand of subduing and settling a continent. We returned to it again through unexpected paths. In the 1930s the federal government took bold and often strikingly effective steps to help the artist survive the Great Depression. In the 1950s we recognized anew the role that art plays in making plain to the world the strength and vitality of our civilization. Today we go beyond these rather secondary motives. We value the arts in the national life not in terms of welfare, not in terms of propaganda, but in terms of their intrinsic worth and their contribution to the people's well-being. The image we present abroad is important. Even more so is the reality we feel and experience here at home. It is this reality that we now seek to acknowledge—the life of the arts for their own sake, the abiding expression of a people's visions and values.

Nevertheless, there are thoughtful men—many of them, I know, among museum trustees and directors—who are troubled when they hear affirmed the existence of a relationship between government and the arts. How, it is asked, can they have anything to do with each other? Here, on the one hand, is the organization of government, lumbering, heavy handed, concerned with housekeeping on a gigantic scale. Here is the individual artist, subtle and creative. Where is there a relationship between them? Government acts for the great mass; the artist dreams his own dreams, apart.

My first answer to the concern which such men express is to say that in the nature of things, government, where it impinges upon the realm of the arts, must be very modest in its claims, very tentative in its initiatives. Government, after all, cannot itself compose a symphony, write a poem, paint a picture. What it can do is to encourage and stimulate those who do compose and write and paint. It can recognize excellence in all such fields. It can make sure that it places no unnecessary obstacles in the path of its attainment.

My second answer is more philosophical. It affirms a relationship based upon a particular view of politics—and a particular view of art. I see politics at its best as being a creative force in the life of a free people, depending upon leadership to translate ideals into laws and institutions. I see art as performing at an even higher level the same function: embodying

in compositions and structures the spirit that moves a civilization. There have been periods, it is true, when art has appeared to be divorced from society. Since the beginning of the modern age, roughly the beginning of the 16th century, the artist has tended to go his own way, no longer connected closely with the everyday life of the citizen. He became a different kind of being, working by lights that the ordinary man or woman could not perceive. Perhaps the widest development of this breach occurred near the start of the present century, when a group of artists glorified in the name of *les fauves*—wild beasts—men not merely against society but in the precise sense outside it. Yet even in the form of estrangement or of rebellion art

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was still a part of its own time. Even in its most abstract forms today, art is telling us things that in other fields the physicist has discerned, that the most advanced psychologists and theologians have glimpsed. Lucretius penetrated solid matter to speak of atoms long before science had guessed their existence; so the poets and painters have always played the role of prophet, and at the top of their genius have been as much concerned with the nature of things as with the search for beauty.

In the greatest ages, the congruity between life and art has been especially plain. The Greek civilization was marked by a single style. The Elizabethans spoke with one voice, whether they were men of action—the discoverers and captains and explorers—or men of thought. In our age, it seems to me, we must once more reassert a unity between the various forms of art, and between art and other spheres of life. The modern world may seem complex and even cold; but that a modern world exists—a world with its own mark and idiom—can hardly be denied.

At the level of philosophy, therefore, we can say that a relationship does exist between art and politics. At the practical level of plans and policies, we must still remain prudent. In both spheres there must be restraint. The limitations upon government have already been stressed. In the world of arts men must





*Here, and on the following pages, are images of museums' "public character," from the late 1950s and early 1960s: Visitors to the Woolaroc Museum in Bartlesville, Oklahoma (top left); the Annual Outdoor Art Show held by the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (above); outdoor advertising for the North Carolina Museum of Art's Rembrandt exhibition (left).*

not go about with visions of sudden support from government. At the same time they will not, I hope, resist the development of new ways.

At this practical level we come up against the web of cultural institutions through which the strivings and insights of the individual artist are made articulate and are carried down from one generation to the next. The artist by himself is a capricious and high-spirited being. He gives off sparks; he astonishes and dazzles. If that light is to be steadied and made serviceable to mankind, it must be embodied in durable institutions. The works of the painter lie about in the form of random and perishable glimpses, except as they are collected and housed and preserved; the words of the poet vanish with the wind, except as they are caught and transmitted through books, and made accessible in libraries. It is sometimes assumed

that the artist suffers from this involvement with institutions. In truth he is liberated. He becomes more fully himself as he speaks through the organizations that comprise the social order. The actor is nothing without a company of actors, the musician only half himself without the orchestra.

Some of the institutions of art are old and rooted. Some are deciduous and pass with the generation. They will incorporate different functions and purposes, as different as that of a museum or an opera, a library or a symphony orchestra. What distinguishes them is their capacity to serve a continuing cultural need—to survive change, to outlive individual careers, to carry forward with a sort of fine impersonality, the objectives for which they were born.

All of these institutions have in some measure or other a public character. It seems their destiny to be-



come more avowedly public as their nature is fulfilled. Museums and libraries began as private collections, but they could not remain private as the genius of the modern world revealed itself. The great revolutions in Europe brought the libraries and museums into a new position; they passed at a stroke, it has been said, "from royal patronage to bureaucratic statism." In the United States these same institutions have remained outside of the state bureaucracy, and yet from the beginning they have had something more than a private role. Men like Jefferson and Franklin were experimental and ingenious enough to set the precedent for cultural institutions, tied in at many points to the community, yet keeping an essential freedom.

. . . It may be asserted that these so-called private institutions of the arts have all these years been setting themselves one paramount aim—to serve the public. They have felt themselves to be responsible to a wider interest than that represented by their original founder, by their trustees or their members. They have been supported by the people both directly and indirectly. There is no form of institutional framework that is not represented among them, from complete private endowments to complete support by a city or a state. It seems inevitable that as new conditions arise in our society, we shall find still other

varieties and combinations, that we shall bring different interests together in novel proportions. As we do this we shall not be departing from tradition, but carrying further what has been true of American cultural life throughout its history.

When I look at all these institutions, so different in so many ways, I am tempted to make one generalization in regard to them. They are all in a period of economic trial. Many of them are in a period of economic uncertainty. The old sources of patronage alter; new sources have not been adequately developed. Meanwhile increased demands are made by a public that is hungry for the benefits of the museum, the library, the symphony. So venerable an institution as the Metropolitan Opera came within an inch of not having a season this year; and there is hardly a symphony but faces annually an acute financial crisis. If the arts are to fulfill their promise in this country, it seems essential that the cultural institutions, working in cooperation with each other, raise their sights, acknowledge the importance of their role and make plans adequate to the needs of society.

No single source of support promises an easy way out of the stringent financial situation. Some men have put their hopes in the foundations, some in the corporations, some in government. It is in these and other sources being brought together, each making

*Young visitors tour the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts with the help of audio guides.*







*At the Gibbes Art Gallery in Charleston, South Carolina, a fourth-grade class learns about 19th-century portraits from the Carolina Art Association.*

its own legitimate contribution, that the best hope lies. The universities of this country after the war took a long look at their resources in relation to the changing times. They took into account the growing population, the increased desire for a college education, the necessity of providing the professors with a fit salary. Then they embarked upon campaigns to provide annual giving and increased endowments sufficient to let them move confidently into the next decades. It seems to me significant that Harvard, which in many ways set the pace for this new level of foresight and effort, found in the end that substantial contributions were coming from contracts with the federal government. This was an occasion—and I am optimistic enough to think that such occasions are not rare—when all things seemed to work together for good.

*Luncheon on the members' penthouse terrace of the Museum of Modern Art, 1957*

It is an act of statesmanship comparable to that of the universities which the cultural institutions are now called upon to undertake. There need be no discouragement. There can only be pride that the expectations with which men look to the arts today create this necessity—and create also, I believe, the means to meet the challenge.

Of the museums I would now speak somewhat more specifically. They are in many ways the most prosperous of America's cultural institutions. They are the most mature and the most highly developed. Yet to a surprising extent—despite the admirable efforts of the research department of the American Association of Museums—we are still disconcertingly ignorant in regard to the real facts concerning them.





We are confused as to the quality and characteristics that should make them. If the problems of growth and change are to be dealt with successfully in this field, a constantly expanding body of authoritative knowledge is required.

In regard to the sources of support of American museums we are being enlightened by the inquiries of the AAM. It is significant, for example, that of total museum income, only 2 percent is at present coming from foundations, corporations and government combined. Looked at from another point of view, only 1 percent of the total charitable contributions of individuals, corporations and foundations is going to museums. From such figures one should be able to draw meaningful conclusions. Government at all levels is making the museums a very small contribution. Where municipalities do contribute, the largest share goes to zoos, the least to art museums. Here again conclusions might be drawn.

Despite the research recently accomplished, our knowledge as to the number of museums, their kind, quality and programs is still slim. Here, as throughout the cultural life, there has been a tendency to neglect research, as if factual knowledge in this area were somehow an unworthy pursuit. Yet it is through facts that services can be improved, standards raised and new sources of support developed. Surveys of needs and of potential audience response may lead to healthy experimentation. The attitude toward admission fees has been profitably researched by at least one museum, with results that were both surprising and profitable. The readiness of the public to accept payment of an entrance fee is perhaps more widespread than is ordinarily recognized. I recall in the Soviet Union being amused at the care with which admission fees are collected—as if communism shunned the idea of giving something away free, while our capitalist country hesitated to charge for a service fairly rendered! Let me mention, in addition, that if the museums are going to attain—as I believe they should—the same level of tax deductibility as is now granted to educational institutions, they need to evolve standards of evaluation more realistic than anything now in force.

The new demands that are being made upon the museums—demands for boldness in planning, for self-knowledge and for increased services—are a reflection of deep forces within the social order. There is a hunger for the enjoyment of the arts that our people have not felt before on any comparable scale. There is a desire to understand and to appreciate that is new in its breadth and intensity. Why should this be so? How does it happen that at this particular time such interests should be making themselves felt



*The two cloisters and gardens at the Dayton Art Institute provide inspiration for summer school art students.*

among us? One day the social historian will be able to formulate theories; we can only hazard a guess or two as we ride the crest of the tide. Surely, for example, this awareness of the arts has something to do with the vast technological strides of our time.

The secretary of labor, Arthur Goldberg, takes a firm position against any shortening of the work day or week. I do not want to invade Goldberg's field—though he has invaded with happy results the field of the arts. Nevertheless it seems to me inevitable that all this machinery is going to diminish the work that falls to each individual. Late in the 19th century, when the industrial revolution was already far advanced, John Stuart Mill astonished his contemporaries with the simple observation that labor-saving machinery had in fact not saved any labor. That was true then; to a large extent it has remained true. As the capacity to produce has increased, we have multiplied our wants, created hitherto unknown forms of consumer goods and undertaken new tasks around the world. But sooner or later the machines are going to catch up with us. Then we shall have to ask what we shall do with the free time that falls to us in unprecedented quantities.

Premonitions of an age of leisure already abound. Men and women sense that they are entering upon a new period in human existence, when they face the choice of succumbing to mass listlessness and boredom or of fulfilling their lives with creative tasks,





*Against the background of a handcarved turn-of-the-century circus wagon, rapt youngsters hear tales of circus history from a museum librarian, Hertzberg Circus Collection, San Antonio Public Library.*

voluntarily pursued for their own sake. An instinct of self-preservation seems to be at work. As a people we do not intend to accept the path that can only lead to decline; we reach out toward new opportunities for the development of man's spiritual and intellectual gifts. The arts haunt the mind of the modern citizen, as a land into which he may yet enter, where he will find a release of his energies and a cause worthy of his efforts. The dream is at work among us; it is changing the pattern of our oldest cultural institutions and calling into being new institutions capable of giving form and direction to the quest of the free citizen.

The burden of my plea, therefore, is that you realize how great an enterprise is that in which you are engaged. You are not in the work for your own profit or your own pleasure alone. You are caught up, whether you like it or not, in one of the great movements of this or any time—the search for meaning and beauty in life, the love of things that appeal to something more than material satisfactions. In all of your deliberations something of this realization is bound to enter; in the end your sense of achievement will be measured by the glimpses you have had of the large cause you serve.

## Afterword, 1984

Reading over the above piece after two decades I am struck by a note of hopefulness, perhaps of innocence. We were all younger then! The entrance of the government into the field of the arts—a major initiative of President Kennedy's—filled many of us with wonder, some with apprehension. Now that the national endowment has become an essential part of our cultural life, and that the states play an indispensable role in the support of institutions, we see government aid as being neither a threat to creativity nor a panacea for artistic ills. It is simply there, a fact of life—as taken for granted as the tariff or supports for farmers.

The “cultural revolution”—I avoided the phrase though it was much on all of our minds—has not turned out to be quite as climactic as some of us foresaw. Large numbers of the population still depend on television for their cultural uplift—and television remains in large part a “wasteland.” The hope for a national repertory theater, and even for vital regional theaters, stands unfulfilled. Museums have watched their attendance grow, but too often as a result of “blockbuster” shows that divert attention from the true functions of the institution.

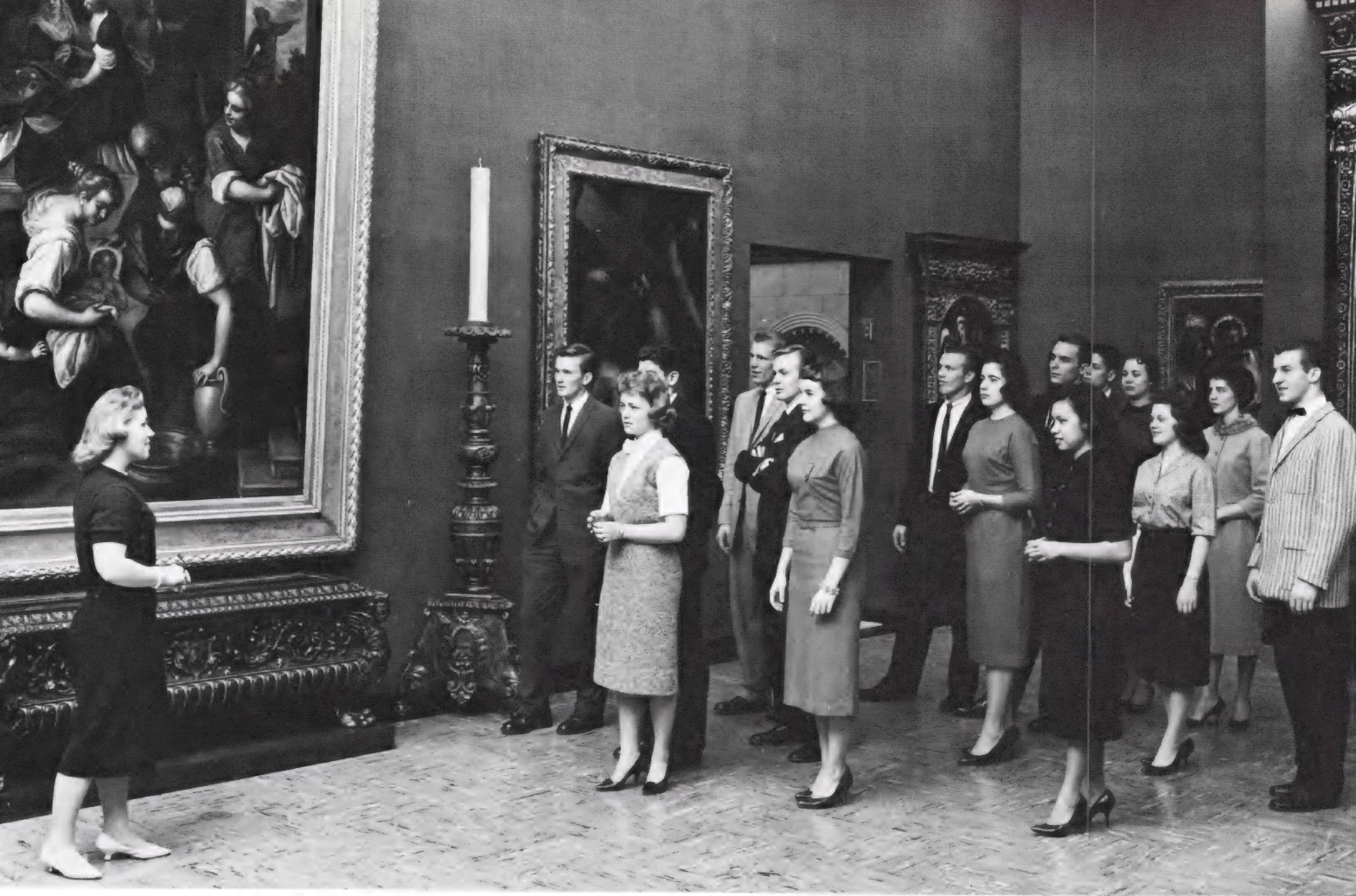
Museums have managed to impose entrance fees, whether compulsory or under the pretense of being

voluntary. But these fees have further intensified the need for sensational exhibitions and have robbed museum-going of much of its liberal, pleasingly indolent character. The joy of dropping freely in and out of Washington's museums is greatly appreciated by visitors to that city. It is in happy contrast to the need for premeditation and for a considerable financial transaction required, for example, before entering New York's Metropolitan Museum.

As for the substance of art, we have seen it pass from the abstract expressionism that was still predominant when I wrote my article through op art, pop art, various forms of conceptual and minimal art, and often into byways of funk. It would be more difficult now to defend my thesis that art interprets the national ideals and prefigures the insights of science. If one did venture on such an interpretation, the conclusion would be less optimistic than was mine two decades ago!

President Kennedy liked to state that more people attended museums in a given year than went to baseball games. I tried to dissuade him from using what appeared a dubious and unsupported statistic. Still, it was wonderful to have that conviction—and to believe that in going to museums people really were educated, disciplined, enlightened. Perhaps some of them are. In that hope, when all is said, lies the best prospect for the quality of our cultural life. Δ





A docent at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh interprets a painting in the museum collection for a group of students. The photos on the following pages, all from the late 1950s and early 1960s, illustrate the various functions of museums.

## Glimpses of the Large Cause

# The Museum In America, 1963

Edgar P. Richardson

*In the 20 years since Edgar Preston Richardson addressed the 58th AAM Annual Meeting in Seattle, museums have made extraordinary progress in developing standards, achieving broader recognition as sig-*

*nificant educational and cultural institutions and providing public education with little of the compromise Richardson feared. There are now "new standards and new conceptions of museum work," and the AAM has been the "instrument of national cooperation" Richardson hoped it would be.*

*When he accepted the AAM's Award for Distinguished Service to Museums in 1981, Richardson returned to the notion of museum collections as a national resource, believing as he did in the 1960s that museums have not committed enough time, money or intellectual energy to what they have. It is still a plea worth listening to.*

*Edgar Preston Richardson was director of two major museums—the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Winterthur Museum—and the founder of the Archives of American Art. He is retired and lives in Philadelphia.*

**T**he museum as an institution is not very old. Its organized life in human society is confined to the past 150 years. This is not a long period of time. The institution is still in the process of rapid growth and development. At this moment it seems to be evolving toward the cultural center. It offers not only opportunities to learn about the



progress of science, art or history, but experiences of the performing arts: programs of music, theater, children's theater, opera, films, all sorts of amusements and pleasures. This process may continue. But the museum was created to perform, and still basically does perform, four functions in human society. It is an institution created to *collect*, to *preserve*, to *exhibit* and to *interpret*.

To collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret *what*? The earliest North American museum was founded by the painter, Charles Willson Peale, and was housed in the building we know as Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Peale's museum aimed at nothing less than the representation of the universe of nature as known to the best scientific knowledge of that day, and the

an astonishing ardor and success. Remember that there are great areas of the world where museums do not exist; great areas where museums are only storehouses for the local past. The passionate thirst for universal knowledge represented in the museums of North America is a rare phenomenon in human society. This aim has never been explicit. It has been pursued the more ardently, perhaps, for being an unconscious urge, and to me it says something very profound about the nature of our civilization. As a cultural phenomenon it is worthy of greater attention than it has received.

The second function of a museum is to preserve these objects for the future. In the past 30 years, I believe it fair to say, there has been a substantial im-



*A preparator assembles an exhibit about horses for the New York State Museum (left). At the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio, an art history professor teaches Flemish painting techniques to a seminar of advanced students (center). Workers at the Woolaroc Museum in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, lead a moosehead into a fumigation chamber (right).*

story of man and our country, man being considered as a part of nature. That ideal of universal knowledge has guided the subsequent century and a half, during which the museums of North America have collected millions of objects from every part of the world. . . . American museums now tell with immense authority and comprehensiveness the story of the earth, of life upon the earth (plants, animals and man), of man's skills, of his imagination, of his dreaming and creating mind. More important to remember is that this story is told by its *original evidences* only in museums. It is told only by objects, because what was said, or spoken or sung in the past, as well as the evidence of ritual and dance, have been preserved from only a small portion of the earth's surface, and from a very, very small portion of time. The vast story of earth and of life lives only in material objects that are preserved in, and are the special province of, museums.

That story is told today with marvelous completeness in the museums of our continent. Their collections accumulated in the past 150 years represent a thirst for universal knowledge and a search for the universal evidences of earth and of life pursued with

provement in our care of the rare, ancient and fragile objects in our keeping. Museum laboratories and departments of conservation are today an expanding development.

The third function is to exhibit these collections. Museums in North America are not mere storehouses; they are places where collections of objects are shown in an intelligible and rational form for public study and pleasure. In every museum field—art, science, history, technology, historic houses, children's museums, open-air museums—there have been most interesting things done in the field of exhibition and display since 1930.

The fourth function is to interpret these collections. There has been a great outpouring of energy, imagination and idealism by museums in our time into popular education. Think of a few of the things that have happened. Colonial Williamsburg has been created. The National Park Service has developed its methods of instruction in a manner as scholarly in research as it is varied and imaginative. Museums have done all kinds of things: created art-mobiles to take popular education outside their walls; produced



radio and television programs; offered electronic guided tours; produced films interpreting their work and their collections. The interesting experiments in popular education are too numerous to mention.

But a price must be paid for everything. The things I have mentioned have been accomplished at the price of not accomplishing other things. It is no secret that the economic prosperity of the United States and Canada since the last war has not extended to museums. All have had to struggle with the inflation of their costs and the deflation of their incomes. They have received little help from outside in these 30 years, either from foundations, from private generosity or from government agencies. As one goes about among museum people today, one hears many gloomy complaints about the situation in which we find ourselves, many expressions of doubt and misgiving. Joseph A. Patterson, director of the American Association of Museums, [recently] summarized the current problems of museums. Let me remind you of his main points.

1. There is the lack of recognition of the role of the museum by government agencies and by other national institutions concerned with education and cultural affairs. It is surely an astonishing fact that in the present Congress three separate bills were introduced by senators interested in a National Advisory Council on the Arts, none of which mentioned museums. They mentioned the theater, the opera, the ballet, music, the visual arts, but failed to make any mention of museums until the director of the American Association of Museums intervened and made his protests effective! . . .
2. The problem of the low rate of pay prevailing in most museums, with the consequent difficulty in attracting able and well-trained people into the field.
3. Finally, this economic distress is part of a general lack of understanding on the part of the public of the intellectual and cultural significance of museums.

It would be ridiculous for us, as professional people, to spend our time complaining that the public does

not appreciate us. I prefer to try to estimate the price we have paid for the direction our work has taken during the past 30 years; to ask what we have not achieved; and to inquire whether we ourselves may have been somewhat at fault. Let us forget about the deficiencies of the public, the foundations, the government, and consider ourselves.

The price paid for the growth in numbers since 1930 is that we have now far too many weak and isolated institutions scattered over this continent. Too many museums have been founded without realization of the amount of money, organization and professional skill required to create an effective museum. . . .

There is a great need for standards: standards for staff training, for museum apprenticeship to learn how a well-run museum operates, how to catalog and record, how to care for and preserve, how to choose and comprehend, how to learn and how to interpret. There is an equal need for standards of support. There should be a degree of financial realism in plans for new museums. . . . The attempt by the American Association of Museums to set standards for the museum field is to face an urgent necessity.

Another necessity, I suggest, is to rethink our goals and activities in the light of the changed conditions of our time. Let me go back to the four basic functions, collecting, preserving, exhibiting and interpreting.

. . . The collecting activity of American museums since 1930 has been extraordinary, in quantity and quality, in variety and historical sweep. Yet at the same time there is a haunting question. . . . Is there today any social or intellectual justification for the attempt to create such miscellaneous, largely unstudied and unorganized collections? The question presents itself in several forms.

In the first place, we are confronted by the exhaustion of the supply of Old Masters and many other phases of art, as well as by laws against the export of works of art and laws requiring that archeological material stay in the country from whose soil it emerged. I do not protest or question this, but it alters the situation drastically. Many of the possibilities that were open 40 years ago are now closed, and policies that led to good results then do not necessarily bring them today. It is time to take thought. . . .

Are museums today attempting the physically and economically impossible? Does the idea of universality now lead us to try to represent and interpret, badly, everything in the world instead of achieving successfully a more limited, more specific goal? The



*Recording a radio program in the galleries of the North Carolina Museum of Art, 1959*





*A student workshop at the Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art*

notable success of museums devoted to a limited field—the art of one school, the history of one region, one phase of technology—in the past 30 years is significant. . . . Perhaps American museums will now become . . . engaged principally in finding the best use of what they already have.

What *do* American museums have? Who, in fact, knows what is already in American museums? . . . We do not even have an atlas of American museum collections, still less a comprehensive knowledge of them.

Nor have we solved the problem of the proper care and preservation of the objects we are collecting. For one large museum with a good conservation program, there are 20 small ones that do nothing at all about it. . . . The problem has a larger aspect in the separation that exists between curatorship and research in many museums of science and in many college and university museums. In how many places are collections slowly disintegrating because other fields of research now absorb attention? . . . The neglect of the known and familiar in the excitement of what is new is a temptation to which all brain workers are subject. When research is separated from curatorship, the dangers of neglect are doubled.

In exhibition, we must grant that modern forms of display, which make museum galleries and cases more attractive than perhaps they were 30 years ago, have also extracted their price. The modern art of display demands that more and more of the permanent collections be retired to storage, where they may be neglected and disintegrate. There is a further price exacted in the difficulty thus placed in the way of the serious student. We must face the fact that the attrac-

tive modern display of museum objects does *not* present the full story of an event or a phase of history. It is a selection carefully edited to fit the interests of the audience of today and of the man selecting the display. The unknown, the out-of-fashion, the hard-to-place objects are edited out of it. . . . Modern display is very often an obstacle to serious study in depth, and we have not in compensation given the scholar the comprehensive catalogs, the open storerooms, the film strips or other tools of research that he needs.

And what is the price we pay for the direction we have taken toward popular education? Some of its successes, such as the work of Colonial Williamsburg or the National Park Service in reaching the largest possible numbers upon the highest possible level, are things we should be proud to see accomplished in our time. But in older institutions with fixed resources, the new programs aimed at the popular audience that have proliferated in the past 30 years—as have public relations staffs and fund-raising staffs—have been financed, necessarily, at the expense of other activities, and notably at the expense of scholarly study. The scholarly staffs of these institutions have not grown; in fact they are often smaller than they were 30 years ago. Catalogs of collections have not been prepared. The scholarly publications issued by museums in the



*Museums and public education: Youngsters on a guided tour at the North Carolina Museum of Art*





*A women's group views "Why Our Nation Grows," a population exhibit at the Cleveland Health Museum, 1961.*

1920s have disappeared, to be replaced by glossier, popular publications.

I am struck by the fact that, in contrast to the vast expenditure of money and staff time devoted by art museums to loan exhibitions, there is little money and little staff time devoted to the permanent collections we have brought together with such great effort. . . . Surely we need to rethink the cost and the effectiveness of the loan exhibition as an educational technique.

I am struck by the fact, also, that after these decades of popular education and concentration upon efforts to increase attendance, after the establishment of departments of public relations and lavish expenditures upon special exhibitions, we have not succeeded in making the public think of us as educational. We did not occur to the men who wrote our tax laws and omitted museums from the list of educational institutions. Museums as cultural institutions did not occur to the senators who introduced the bills for a National Advisory Council on the Arts until Patterson made our voice heard. We must ask ourselves why this should happen. Is it because our popularization has been aimed too much at quantity rather than at quality? Is it a mistake in the target? I ask the question without knowing the answer.

The question is not whether public museums have an imperative to make their materials accessible, comprehensible and interesting to those outside professional circles; they have this responsibility, and it is basic. But we owe it to ourselves to take a serious

look at the techniques and targets of our efforts in popular education and to try to estimate what their true effectiveness has been.

To sum up, I am convinced that many of the problems we discuss—problems of setting professional standards, of professional training, of care and preservation, problems of dealing with national legislation—can only be met by a kind of cooperative effort among museums that can hardly be said to exist today. It is not provided for in our financial budgets, nor in our organization of staff time, nor even in our thinking. I once used to believe that the individualism of American museums was a source of strength. Each city seemed to be developing museums patterned upon its own community's ideas, addressed to its own needs. But as we look, in 1963, at the number of weak institutions with poorly trained and badly paid staffs, at the museums with programs clearly impossible to achieve without means greater than they have or can hope for, at the museums that are substandard because their communities have never thought of them in professional terms, we are faced with a necessity for new standards and new conceptions of museum work. I believe that we shall need increasingly, in the future, an instrument of national cooperation such as the American Association of Museums offers. It would be well for us to take hold of it and to make a success of it.

And if you feel that I have suggested a shrinking and graying of the horizon ahead, I do not mean to do so. Museums in the Western world have grown up in a time of great changes—intellectual, social, economic, technological, even biological changes, which fostered migration of every kind of museum material from one part of the world to another, or from the sheltering darkness of the earth into the light of museum cases. A multitude of new factors—economic, legal and political—has now altered the situation and placed severe restrictions upon this migration. Very well, perhaps the time has come to spend less energy on amassing collections and more upon working with and thinking about what we have. Collections of art will not stop growing, nor will those of natural history museums or historical museums. Collecting will never come to an end, but it perhaps will not be the primary necessity that it once was. Millions of objects have been gathered; they are in our hands, entrusted to us for the future. If these documents for the story of the earth and of all the forms of life upon the earth have any meaning for the mind, if we take them seriously as a new national resource to be conserved and explored as part of the promise and the future of this continent, we shall not quickly come to the end of the work that stretches before us. Δ



# Turbulence, Relevance, Excellence



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## The Late 1960s and Early 1970s

Historians are just beginning to tackle the 1960s, that era of questioning and social upheaval that extended into the 1970s. Many people who worked in museums at the time have vivid memories of the 1970 AAM Annual Meeting, when members of the New York Art Strike and Art Workers' Coalition took over the podium at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel to protest what they called the failure of museums to take strong stands on vital contemporary issues. (In a MUSEUM NEWS article about the meeting, the editors felt it was necessary to print a definition of "sexism.")

The magazine in the years that followed reflected the struggle to come to terms with the times, reach new audiences and broaden the appeal of museums. The image of museums in this country was undergoing one more phase of democratization, this time with close attention to museums as a "stabilizing, regenerative force in modern society..., a crusading force for quality and excellence."



# Branch Out!

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Thomas P. F. Hoving

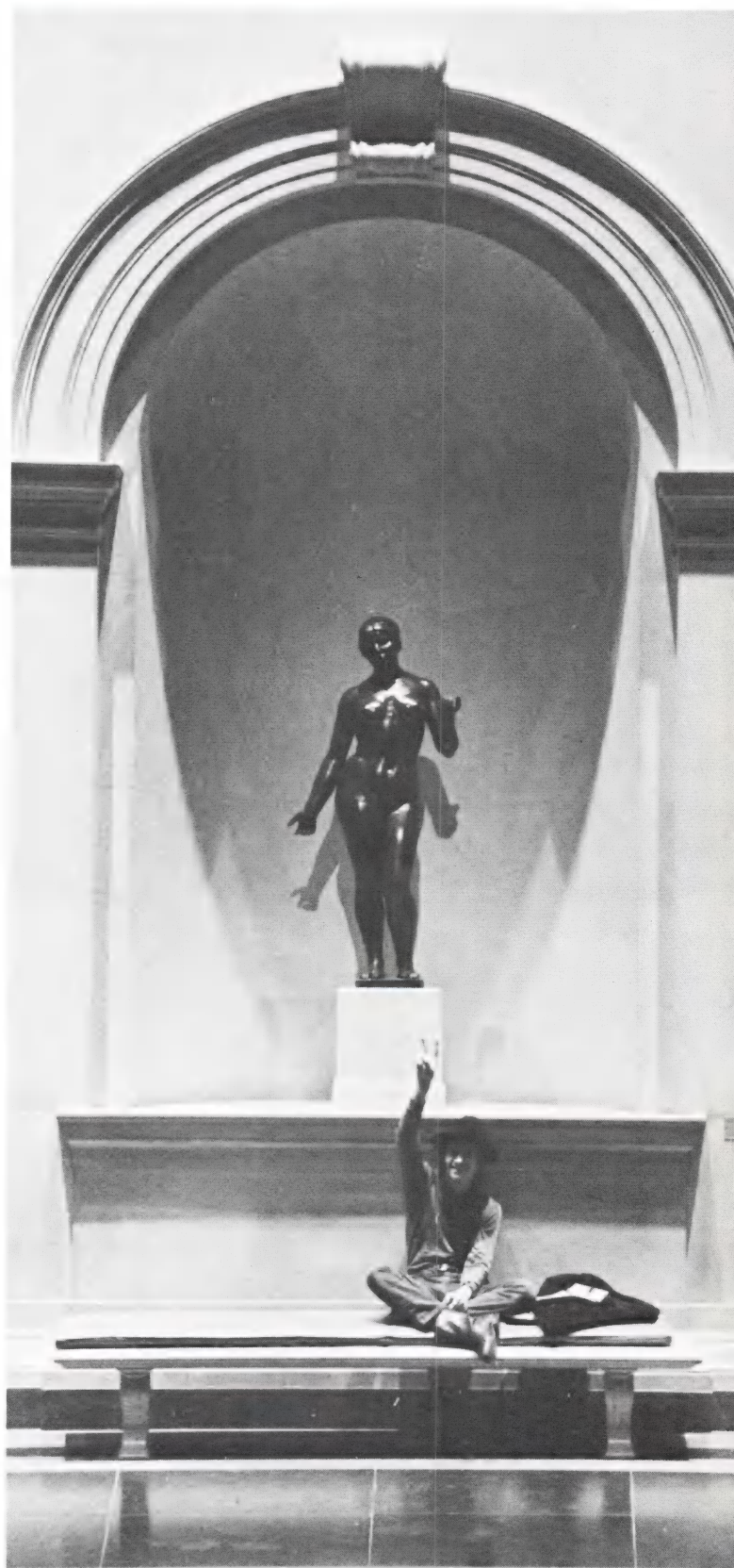
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*In 1968, Thomas Hoving had been director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for just one year, and the controversial exhibition, **Harlem on My Mind**, was about to open, an early manifestation of his efforts to put the exhortations of this article into practice. During Hoving's highly visible tenure, the Metropolitan ventured into territory once considered off-limits to museums.*

*"Branch Out!" is both a warning and a call to action. In the tumult of the times, museums were readily perceived as stodgy, unresponsive institutions. The cure, Hoving urged, was museums' capacity to "alleviate, to humanize, to provide sense and reason, and the balance of quality and excellence."*

*Thomas P.F. Hoving, now the editor-in-chief of **Connoisseur** magazine, was director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1967 to 1977. He is the author, most recently, of **King of the Confessors**.*

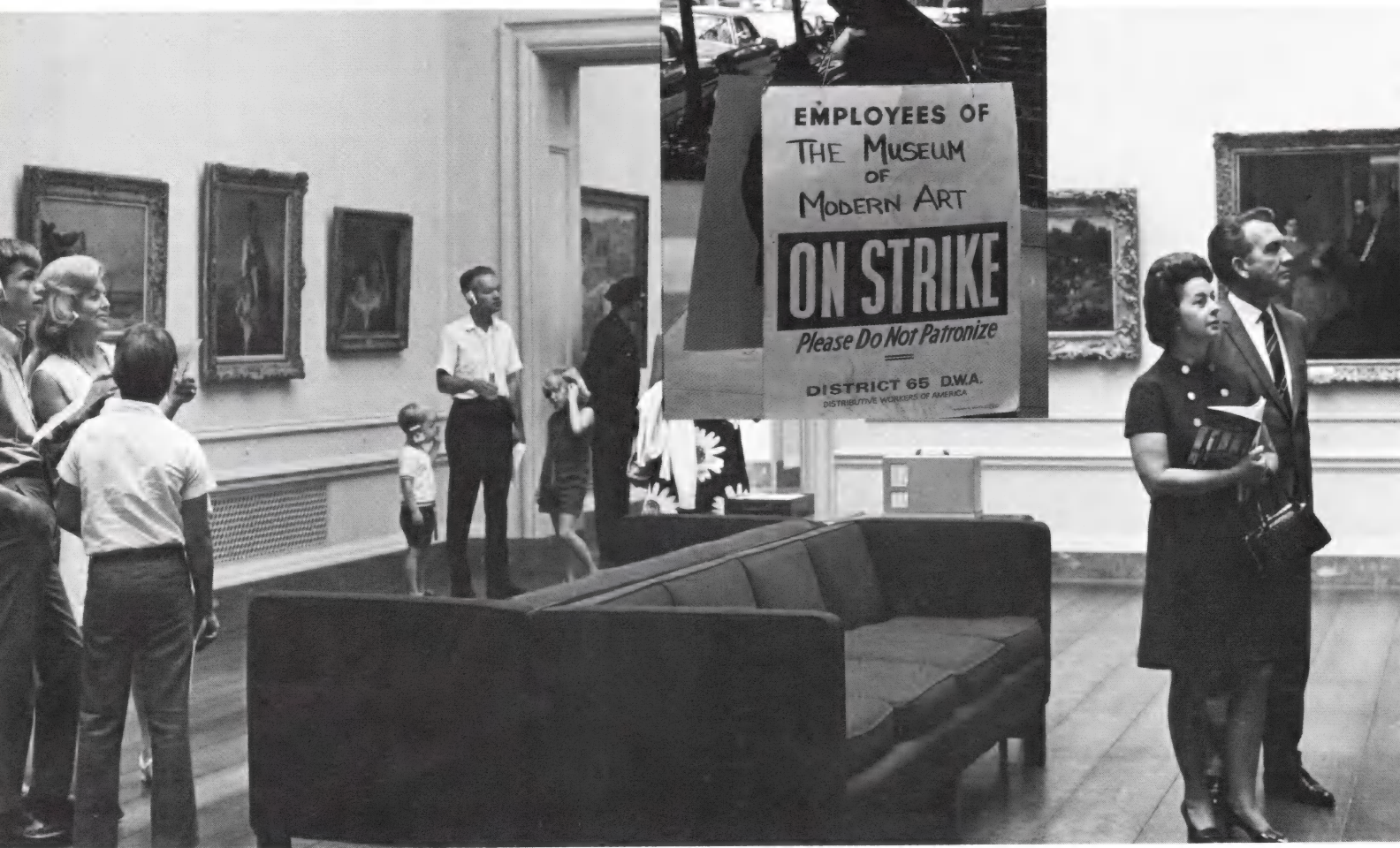
I don't think you need the testimony of a calm and introspective, and rather modest and in some quarters slightly suspect museum director, to tell you that these are revolutionary times. The social order that once changed with a certain detectable, almost leisurely pace, is today quick and unpredictable. It is in flux, in dislocation and in turmoil. And since museums and the cultural phenomena that they represent have a specific locus within our social order and a certain relationship to that social order, many of us have been concerned for a long period of time with



*Antiwar demonstrator in the rotunda of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., April 1971*



Two faces of the decade: Visitors contemplating 19th-century paintings in the National Gallery, and a Museum of Modern Art employee on strike in 1973.



the extent to which that relationship has changed or should change. Thus far, the waters of change have merely been lapping around our feet, and the question that has been seriously raised and has to be considered is not *whether* but exactly in *what* manner we're going to get into the swim and get ourselves wet, get ourselves involved and become far more relevant than we are even today. The alternative to getting into this swim may be the possibility of being unceremoniously pushed in.

On all sides in the United States we hear cries of unreason, dislocation, disunity and moral crisis. The *New York Times* editorial board, which, as you know, is not noted for its rabid extremism, warned recently that we face a national crisis that is dangerous, profound and far-reaching, whose effects are felt in every sphere of life, in every institution, and endanger everyone. This is a crisis requiring a supreme common effort by the nation as a whole. The particular crisis to

which the *New York Times* was at that moment referring was not the tumultuous reception accorded Jim Rosenquist's F-111 at the Metropolitan Museum; what they had in mind was the President's Commission on Civil Disorder and its report. But there are a lot of crises to go around if that's not enough. We have the pervasive crisis of the cities. We have moral crises, we have welfare crises, poverty crises, war crises. There's a crisis affecting traditions and established institutions and their leadership, almost all of which are being examined and some of which are found suspect. As you know, the Twentieth Century Fund is embarking upon a study of the major institutions in the United States to examine their structure, purpose and effect because they believe these institutions to be the foundation blocks of our society and the dominant forces within it. This study is coming at a time, interestingly enough, when those institutions and their leaders are beginning to reshape themselves



because of pressures from within and from without their walls.

First, and most obvious and topical, is education, which is attempting to accommodate itself on the elementary level with decentralization and on the higher level with activists, hippies, disgruntled individuals with long hair and short skirts whose awakened social conscience embraces everything from the ridiculous to the sublime—from pot and flower power to a new participatory democracy. But this turmoil, this dislocation is taking place in religion and in politics and throughout the social structure. The family, for example, is thought to be disappearing as a basic module of society. The New Left automatically distrusts every vested interest, refutes accepted views of history and complains that traditional schools of history have failed to provide them with a usable past. We've got to understand what they mean by this failure to supply them—the youth—with a usable past. What they mean is a body of knowledge, applicable and germane to the problems and energies of today.

Much the same complaint is voiced by young people who do not happen to be members of the New Left or the Students for a Democratic Society. They are mounting a revolt against their elders, which is a momentous thing. It's not merely a generation gap. It is really the beginning of some sort of revolution. They are not now that inert, apathetic, silent generation that some of us were—nor that conforming mass they were once supposed to be. It may be, as Justice Abe Fortas suggests, that this revolution is a forecast of "the development of great maturity and independence of outlook, and in any event, it presents a challenge to the older generations as well as the youth to reconsider the goals of our society and its values, and urgently to reappraise the distribution of function and responsibility among the generations."

It really is no coincidence that what is happening to the nation, socially and politically, has its parallel in what is happening culturally and artistically. From all sides you hear questions, the battering of, launching of, sounding slowly of, criticism about institutions. Allan Kaprow, who is the true "happenings" king as we all know, has denounced museums—especially large museums—as fuddy-duddy remnants from another era. And echoing what was said by the Futurists in Italy, prior to a slight dislocation of the governmental structure there, he has suggested that museums be turned into nightclubs, emptied and left as large environmental sculptures upon our landscape. That, of course, is the challenge in its most blatant form. But merely because it is blatant and because it is somewhat hysterical and awkward, we shouldn't

dismiss it as completely nonsensical. Stripped of its exaggerated fat and eloquence, what Kaprow was saying is what is being said of universities, religion, politics and the traditional pillars of the social order. And it's not just being said by "kooks" or professional dissenters or "zonked out" hippies. What he is saying is that we may not be relevant to our times, and worse, that we may be wholly unsuited to the future.

Well, are we relevant indeed? Are we? I'm sure that we are, but the temperament of the land is changing, and in the ferment of the times we have to find a fully contemporary and responsible role to play. Art, for example, is nonutilitarian, but a museum is wholly utilitarian and cannot afford not to be utilitarian. It has its multiple and excellent uses, and they all fall under the heading of humanism. We have within us—and I think we all know this—a great potential, not only as a stabilizing, regenerative force in modern society, but as a crusading force for quality and excellence. Not only can we be the great batteries where people refresh themselves, but we can also be something outgoing—a crusading force to see that quality and excellence are more broadly known. Our founders established these precepts, and they never meant that our type of institution should withdraw from active life.

What desperately hurts the body politic today is the sense of being torn away from its roots. This is the agony with which dissent must live. But what museums are eminently prepared to do, it seems to me, is to make it possible for people to reestablish a connection with what was glorious and beautiful and

*"Art Strike against Racism, War, Repression, Sexism." Members of the New York Art Strike and Art Workers' Coalition interrupt proceedings of the 1970 AAM Annual Meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York.*







*Antiwar demonstrators in front of the National Gallery of Art, April 1971*

surpassingly excellent in their collective past. What I am saying essentially is that in order to survive, to be relevant, we must continually reexamine what we are, continually ask ourselves how we can make ourselves indispensable and relevant. How can we channel our energies into an intense kind of laser beam, concentrate our capacity for public good and bring it to bear on problems affecting our growing visiting public, our expanding and evolving communities, and our changing nation? We must exert our strengths, utilize our resources—which are massive—and come together to crusade for quality in art and all related fields. . . .

It is interesting that the Greeks had no word for culture; it was woven into the fabric of their total experience. That, it seems to me, is one of our tasks—to see that all is a cultural experience and is interwoven with the economy, the political life and the social structure. We can't sit back on our haunches

with a vague, wonderfully dignified, pleasing smile, and withdraw from all of the vibrant, sometimes shocking events that are erupting around us. In the Greek civilization there was no separation between man the political being, and man the cultural being. Clearly, the United States does not yet have such wholeness and unity. But I do believe that the social upheavals of this day, the violence and agonizing reappraisals of what we are and where we are going, are society's attempt—much of it difficult and awkward—to set itself right. The tumult and dislocation are in the agony of the cure. I strongly believe that museums must throw their weight behind this task and attempt to help, to ease, to alleviate, to humanize, to provide sense and reason, and the balance of quality and excellence to that cure which is coming about.

Think of it after all. What other role is there for museums, which have properly been called the midwives of democracy?

△



# Museum Manifesto

Joseph Veach Noble

*"Museum Manifesto," published in 1970, is one museum director's effort to ground museums in an appropriate reality. The reality of the 1960s was social upheaval; for some museums, the response was total evasion, for others it was a headlong rush into relevance. A more suitable approach, Noble suggested, was a firmer acknowledgment of the common responsibilities of museums, and an application of that unified purpose to make museums truly useful to society.*

*Joseph Veach Noble, director of the Museum of the City of New York, was president of the AAM from 1975 to 1978.*

The turbulence of the 1960s has reached even our most staid institutions, the museums. Some museums have tried to ignore the problems of poverty, race relations and the pollution of our environment by drawing their ivy-covered mantle about them and attempting to retreat into the past. Others, taking the opposite approach, have rushed headlong into "involvement" with little regard for ultimate objectives, wasting no time on planning and evaluation and, in so doing, neither solving the pressing contemporary problems nor fulfilling their obligations for existing programs. The thoughtless quest to be involved at any cost inev-



Picket line at the 1973 strike by Museum of Modern Art Professional and Administrative Staff Association (PASTA/MOMA)



itably results in a disservice to all of the causes that the museum attempts to serve.

If the study of evolution teaches us anything, it is this fundamental truth: When an environment changes, the organism that has inhabited it is faced with three, and only three, choices; it can migrate, modify or die. Museums are living organisms, and the environment in which they have lived has changed. The physical size and legal complexities of a museum usually prevent it from migrating. Some museums will modify, change and adapt themselves to their new environment and in so doing will become relevant and will live. Those that do not adapt themselves, that do not become useful and meaningful in their new environment and to their new audience will ultimately die. (This will result when the life-giving funds to support such museums are withdrawn, whether the funds be from the public or the private sector. If the public is no longer interested in what the museum has to offer, the museum will die.)

Fortunately, as we stand on the threshold of this new decade we have the opportunity of choosing a future for our individual museums. This is a time of confrontation of ideas and should be a time of reassessment of values and goals. But too often we have

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**When an environment changes, the organism that has inhabited it is faced with three, and only three, choices; it can migrate, modify or die.**

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been distracted from objectives and have allowed ourselves to think only in terms of techniques and implementations. Our professional literature and our programs for museum professionals are crowded with subjects of specialized and transitory interests. We busy ourselves discussing dust-proof exhibition cases, membership promotions, insurance problems, security systems, duties of our trustees, utilization of the computer and a thousand other subjects. They, like press relations and fund raising, are not ends in themselves, only means to an end. Regrettably, we have not concentrated on the function and the mission of museums. We have not analyzed our true responsibilities. Over the past few years I have repeatedly asked my museum colleagues, What is the role of the museum? The only common denominator in their replies has been their lack of unanimity.

I strongly believe that there are certain functions and responsibilities common to all museums, regardless of whether they specialize in art, the natural sciences or history. I further believe that it is most im-

portant at this crucial time for museum professionals to be united in common cause. To that end I propose the following declaration of principles.

There are five areas of basic responsibility of every museum. It is up to us to carry out faithfully these five responsibilities so that our institutions are complete and balanced. Museums must serve a complex public of laymen and scholars alike, and then pass on our heritage to future generations. If we do not do this, most assuredly no one else will. Ours is one of the few professions that is charged with being relevant both for today's people and for those who will come after us. We stand as a link between the past and the future, and it is our duty to be a strong link.



*This series of photographs, all taken during the 1960s, provides a visual guide to Noble's manifesto. Here, workers at the North Carolina Museum of Art unpack Rubens' Holy Family with Dove, from the Los Angeles County Museum.*

### **Acquisition**

The first responsibility of a museum is to collect. Acquisitions are our lifeblood, our *raison d'être*. Whether we excavate, purchase at auction, send out expeditions, receive gifts, ferret in attics or are the beneficiaries of bequests, we gather the objects of interest and importance to our particular discipline. The expertise of the archeologist, the sixth sense of an acquisitive curator, the charm and persuasion of the director, all are brought into play to gather in those



objects. The collection is the cornerstone of a museum. The building of it is not only our interest and pleasure; it is also our responsibility. The museums are charged with the task of assembling the works of art, the objects of natural history, the scientific artifacts and the historical memorabilia before they are forever lost to everyone.

An institution that shirks this duty and depends solely upon borrowing from those who have committed themselves to this fundamental task may well

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be a useful exhibition gallery, but it is not a museum. I believe we should support these galleries when the situation warrants, but such institutions in a broader sense are really either satellites or parasites.

### Conservation

The second responsibility of a museum is conservation. It is pointless to gather objects of great beauty, rarity and value and then allow them to deteriorate due to inadequate protection, preservation and restoration. Too many museums in Europe and this country have assembled stunning collections only to neglect them. Once a collection is brought into being it is our inescapable obligation to do all in our power to keep these perishable objects intact and in as near their original condition as possible so that we may

pass them on for posterity. As we learn more about the physical properties of the complex objects in our care, we will be able to employ increasingly effective methods of conservation.

The exhibition gallery that chooses not to have a permanent collection also reneges on the obligation of preservation.

### Study

Third, the responsibility of the museum is to study the objects it has acquired and preserved. Unfortunately, in the past all too many museums were content merely to assemble a collection, preserve it and then completely ignore the scholarly study of the objects. Study is the paramount role of the curator, who



*At the American Museum of Natural History, an ichthyologist examines fish skeletons.*

*A visitor to the National Gallery of Art selects from an extensive selection of slides.*



must extract from each object in his care the facts surrounding its origin, authorship, composition and meaning. The scholarly and technical apparatus of the entire museum stands behind the curator in his quest for knowledge of any object under examination. I firmly believe that every object, man-made or the product of nature, carries within it the clues as to where, when and how it was created. It is up to the curator to decipher this riddle.

In this essential undertaking the exhibition galleries are also derelict. They add nothing to basic knowledge, and they shirk the heavy financial burden of carrying out valuable studies.

### Interpretation

The fourth responsibility, which follows behind acquisition, conservation and study, is that of interpretation of knowledge. The mechanisms for dissemination may be widely varied. They can include scholarly publications, popularized publications, monthly bulletins or newsletters, gallery lectures, mechanical audiovisual devices, television and, if it is well done, even the lowly label. One hopes the era has long since passed when the scholar clutched his findings to his bosom, sharing them sparingly with his colleagues and the intelligentsia. Our public thirsts after knowledge, which we must provide on many different lev-

*A costumed milliner interprets 18th-century fashions to visitors at the Margaret Hunter Shop, Colonial Williamsburg. The shop is a restoration of one operated on the site during the 1770s.*



els. Adult courses, college lectures, young people's programs, school extension programs, which spread the museum's knowledge far beyond its doors, are part of our obligation. It would be pointless to have a museum that, having collected, preserved and studied the objects, did not transmit this knowledge to all those who desired it. At a time when acquisitions are becoming more difficult to find due to rising prices, greater restrictions on export by foreign countries and the drying up of sources of supply, we will be changing our emphasis from collecting to educational outreach.

It is in this area that the exhibition galleries can play a vital role. Located in various parts of a community that cannot financially support an entire museum, and being indigenous to these areas, exhibition

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**The face-to-face confrontation with the real specimen is the reason that the public is inspired to come to the museum.... We must not interpose ourselves as a filter between the work and the observer.**

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galleries have an unparalleled opportunity for involvement and participation with all segments of community groups. Without the financial burdens of acquisition and scholarship, they can concentrate their resources on interpretation at a personal level.

### Exhibition

Finally, we come to the fifth responsibility, which I have purposely placed last because, like the peak of the iceberg, it is the most obvious and the one that the public thinks of first. It is exhibition. The acquisition, conservation, study and interpretation would be of minimal value without exhibition of the object itself. The face-to-face confrontation with the real specimen is the reason that the public is inspired to come to the museum. An artist created his work of art to be viewed by an audience, and he endowed it with a message that will be communicated to its viewer. We must not interpose ourselves as a filter between the work and the observer. In the same way, a natural history specimen must be the real object, be it a dinosaur egg from the Gobi Desert or a moon rock. No photograph, drawing or television show is a substitute for the direct confrontation with the real thing. The original Star-Spangled Banner and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in his own hand exude an ethos that no replica can possess.

I do not believe in André Malraux's "museum without walls" in which reproductions and replicas stand





*Preparing a panel for exhibition at the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley, 1960*

for original objects. We have been successful in educating our public that a plaster cast is not the Venus de Milo and a large color transparency is not a painting by Rembrandt. Interpretive teaching devices have their subsidiary place, but a museum's major mission is its involvement with original objects.

In our lifetime I believe that we will see more changes in the philosophy and methods of exhibition than in any of the other four responsibilities of museums. At one time exhibition meant arranging objects on a glass shelf in decreasing order of size. Fortunately that day is gone. Museums today are moving away from static nonexplanatory exhibitions to

highly selective, dramatic and interpretive presentations. The natural history and science museums have been in the vanguard of this movement, often very effectively integrating imaginative multimedia demonstrations with actual objects. The historical museums also have moved in this direction, but the art museums run a poor third. The art museum, however, has excelled in the "special exhibition," either drawn from its own holdings or borrowed from other museums and/or private collectors. In fact, most art museums have special exhibition galleries, solely for this purpose, that almost never are without a show. On the other hand, the other types of museums have been laggards in this field and rarely have been willing to set aside galleries exclusively for changing exhibitions.

The independent community exhibition galleries, drawing their material from full-fledged museums, have in numerous cases performed pioneering work in exhibition techniques. Being closer to their public and drawing on a smaller community radius, they can shape their exhibitions for the special interests they represent. It is the responsibility of the major museums to assist the community galleries with the three commodities that they possess and that the community galleries do not: objects, conservation and scholarly research. Loans should be undertaken, both long term and short term, and, where conditions permit, there should be outright gifts of objects. I look upon the community galleries as an extension of the

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facilities of the major museums. The direction, interpretation and exhibition are undoubtedly best left to the staff of the community gallery, who are the real experts in their highly specialized fields.

These five responsibilities—acquisition, conservation, study, interpretation and exhibition—are, of course, interrelated; together they form an entity. They are like the five fingers of a hand, each independent but united for common purpose. If a museum omits or slights any of these five responsibilities, it has handicapped itself immeasurably, and I seriously doubt whether such a museum will survive in the challenging years that lie ahead. Conversely, if we each strengthen our own institutions in these five inseparable areas, we will fulfill our obligations to the past and present, and our aspirations for the future.



## Afterword, 1984

I wrote "Museum Manifesto" almost 15 years ago, and since then some billions of people have visited museums in the United States. During that time the world has changed, and museums have changed, fortunately for the better.

In the article I predicted that we would see more changes in the philosophy and methods of exhibition than in the other four responsibilities of museums, and that has come to pass. Today there is a quest for communication and understanding by the public. From a philosophical standpoint, no longer are museum artifacts and works of art treated as an end in themselves, merely as isolated inanimate objects. Rather museums interpret the ideas inherent in them. Museums have responded with permanent installations and special exhibitions that explain the meaning of their exhibits.

Museums are not alone in reacting to this thirst for understanding. Simultaneously, in a parallel field, this same search for meaning has changed completely the direction of contemporary art. The public has rejected the modernism movement, which concentrated on abstraction. Color and pattern were not sufficient to hold the viewers' attention, and these abstract works failed to communicate to an audience

seeking understanding. Now the public has turned to a neo-realism style to which it can relate. Artists quickly have changed to catch up with this new demand for communication and meaning in their work. Amusingly, the critics who believe that they are the leaders and arbiters of taste are still scrambling to catch up and to explain this phenomenon, which they did not anticipate and still do not welcome.

Within the past 15 years another major change has occurred in the lives of our visitors. They used to receive most of their daily information from the printed word. Today they have crossed into the new world of the electronic media, and most of their daily input is from television and radio. Ideas are transmitted more directly and more quickly. In order to communicate with our media-conditioned visitors, our museums are changing their methods and are beginning to use the multimedia language the public understands.

Although I predicted change in the article, I also emphasized that a museum's responsibility to its involvement with original objects was unchanging and fundamental. I am gratified to see that the current studies of the Commission on Museums for a New Century reaffirm this cardinal point.

It isn't often one gets the opportunity to review what one wrote years ago and have a chance to change one's mind. But, no, thank you, I think "Museum Manifesto" is still valid today. I will stand by it. I still nail my manifesto to the door of the cathedral. Δ

*Scene from AAM annual meeting in the early 1970s.*





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Turbulence, Relevance, Excellence

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# The Art Museum as a Wilderness Area

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*Sherman E. Lee*

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*Like a voice in the same wilderness, Sherman E. Lee took to the "Opinion" column of MUSEUM NEWS in 1972 to express his consternation at current views of the art museum's role in society. Many of the issues he identifies are unresolved today: Are museums compromised or adulterated by their eagerness to please the public? Do art museums contribute actively or passively to visual literacy and esthetic understanding?*

*Sherman Lee retired last June after serving as director of the Cleveland Museum of Art for 25 years. He lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he is adjunct professor of art history at the University of North Carolina. A collection of his essays, Past, Present, East and West, was published last summer by George Braziller, Inc.*

**T**he current and justifiable concern—even outrage—about the environment (or, to use a more fashionable turn of phrase, our ecology) exhibits a certain ironical justice when I think yet again about the situation of the art museum in contemporary society. Consistency of thought dictates that we recognize the proper relationships between the conservation of our environment and the preservation of our artistic patrimony.





Whether nature is the creation of deity or fortune, art is the creation of man in his most godlike or fortunate aspect. Like nature, it can arouse wonder or delight, fear or awe, and further, art too is a fragile thing, easily adulterated, destroyed and forgotten.

Conservationists are well aware that the use of nature is the key to its well-being. Restricted cutting of timber is essential if more is to be available tomorrow. The number of roads or hotels in a park area does have a limit beyond which one ceases to have a park—which after all was the reason to have any roads or hotels in the first place. If one moves further into the highest and purest realms of nature—to the wilderness areas—the need for negative thinking becomes even more important. No roads, no hotels whatsoever, else there is no wilderness to remind us of the absolute standards of nature, nothing by which we can compare and evaluate the varying degrees of man's domestication of his natural environment.

Like a wilderness area, the art museum can be a reminder of standards, of what was pure and original. It is something of a bad joke that while conservative commercial interests usually accomplish the destruction of the wilderness, it is the radical and self-appointed *avant-garde* that demands the burning of the art museums and the acceptance of nonart or anti-art. The cream of the jest is in the identical motives of the destroyers—with nothing for comparison, whether

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### **Whether nature is the creation of deity or fortune, art is the creation of man in his most godlike or fortunate aspect.**

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of nature or of art, anything goes, all criteria disappear and the mediocre scrub pines or noncreators become giants of the earth. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. What is tragic about the joke is the spectacle of museums digging their own graves under the sardonically approving eyes of their enemies.

Like the wilderness, the best of the past in art is a basic source without which we are poorer. Rembrandt's paintings tell us of age, its suffering and of the dignity with which this anguish can be met—all this by means of a materially interesting, even appropriately aged texture and surface. Without this particular approach to knowledge we would be poorer. The artist enlarges our humanity or, if you will, makes us discover it or rediscover it. His works are a part of the natural state of art—of its wilderness.

To use the wilderness one must come prepared, stripped down to meet a challenge. This does not mean discriminatory exclusion from the Garden of

Eden but the necessity of meeting the demands of nature on its own terms and in such a way as not to deprive it of its naturalness. Canoes, not outboards. Trails, not autobahns. Tents, not trailers. The prohibitions are numerous and well justified if one wishes to preserve what one explores. Clearly the restrictions do not favor the rich or powerful, and nature is blind to race or creed. And yet not many brave even the minor restrictions of park areas, while even fewer experience the remarkable qualities of the wilderness areas. Nevertheless some elect to come. In short they are an elite.

What a dreadful word! In dialectical materialist art criticism, elitist is a self-explanatory condemnation. Just breathe elitist and one has reduced the art establishment to cinders of fascist black. The dictionary tells us "a choice or select body; the flower" and cites "the active army of Switzerland." The Latin root *eligere* means to choose. There is a better reason to think of a nature or art elite as choosing the way of nature or of art rather than being chosen by some mysterious Calvinist-like agency, above question or dispute. Elite indeed! Everyone interested in and/or knowledgeable about art should bear the epithet with grace and pride. If we follow the often-recommended versions of democratic art, we end with nothing—with Tolstoy's Russian peasant art.

The question really should be, How does one join the elite? How do the masses capture art? How does one do the art establishment in the eye? Not by the destruction demanded by the elite of the current *avant-garde* but, quite simply, by appropriating the desire, knowledge and understanding however difficult the means, lavished on the arts by the establishment *in spite of* its admittedly privileged position with relation to art. In short—fish or cut bait. If one wants to play, learn the rudiments of the game. It is the responsibility of museums, and especially schools and the network of mass communication, to make the means available. If the intricacies of interior line play in professional football can be learned, seemingly by osmosis from television, surely the rudimentary elements of visual acuity can be absorbed, if willed.

The museum's responsibility has its limits dictated by requirements similar to those of a wilderness area. The instruments of a broader enlightenment are those already in existence for just those purposes—schools, periodicals, newspapers (*not* the society page), television. Obviously our society, unlike that of the Japanese, to take the most obvious example, is visually illiterate. Children can spell *c-a-t*, and almost all adults can manage more difficult literary tasks. In the arts to be able to do the equivalent of spelling *c-a-t* is to be a member of the elite. The art museum can sup-



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ply models of visual understanding and must supply the original source materials (i.e., the best works of art). But it cannot become a Disneyland when it must be a genuine wilderness area. Unfortunately, as the most visible manifestation of the arts in modern Western society, the art museum has become the whipping boy, at best, for the frustrated, and at worst, for the malicious attacks of a rival elite. It is time for art museums and for those genuinely interested in their survival and proper development to resist ac-

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**Like a wilderness area, the art museum can be a reminder of standards, of what was pure and original. . . . Like the wilderness, the best of the past in art is a basic source without which we are poorer.**

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tively the chaotic demands forced upon them equally from the swinging set to the moralizing Maoists.

One major danger in this necessary resistance will be self-justification. If an 1870 charter, written with solid Victorian moral uplift, mentions the elevation of public taste, it does not necessarily follow that abortive, yet symbolic, attempts at mass education in 1970 can be really achieved by an art museum rather than other, larger and more pervasive institutions or processes. Playing at education may well be worse than no education at all—I do *not* suggest we do nothing. I do suggest that we do some more radical thinking than has been done about the role of the art museum as a basic mass educational force in the community. And always the stern charge of providing a truly original and genuine visual content for a growing elite must be accounted for. To do this means a dedication to collections and exhibitions of fine works of art, chosen for their quality and meaningfulness in artistic terms.

Harold Rosenberg (*New Yorker*, Oct. 10, 1970) notes that:

Even Trotsky, who judged human undertakings by their usefulness to the Revolution, conceded—in opposition to Lenin's dictum that "art belongs to the people"—that painting or any other art, has interests that belong exclusively to itself. As the physical embodiment of the separateness of the arts, a museum is privileged to claim immunity from the issues of the moment. . . . In Malraux's view, the museum stands above the torments and defeat that the iron determinism of history inflicts on the man of action. Its sacred obligation is to compile and keep intact the record of human freedom and creativeness, and this demands that it resist adulteration by matters not yet resolved into the enduring forms of art.

And even more specifically, Melvin Tumin (in *Arts in Society*, "The Arts and the Human Environment," p. 490) writes:

As for criticism, you well know better than I what you have to do about the state of criticism in the world; and about the relations between artists and museums; and between museums and neighborhoods. Meanwhile I know as well as anyone what has to be done about such things as Black Art and Working Class Art and Women's Lib Art: *They have to be exterminated as concepts from our thinking.* They are simply another version of *Songs That Commissars Can Whistle*, which was Stalin's criterion of acceptable music. Any art works, like any science works, that are modified by adjectives such as Black, Free, Woman's etc.—and thereby enhanced in their public acceptability—are a curse to everyone, especially any self-respecting artist who happens to be a Black or a Woman.

I know that I have repeated myself here from several previous occasions when invited to speak or write on the general problem of the art museum in contemporary society. While I apologize for the repetition, I do not for the content. I still believe that today's art museums must overcome their continuing crisis of confidence, and, while rededicating themselves to their continuing primary responsibilities, explore in a really radical, profound and possibly unpopular way, their other responsibilities to the community and society in which they exist.

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## Afterword, 1984

I wish I could take a more cheerful and positive position than that embodied in the brief note of 1972. Unfortunately this is not possible, and I find my uneasiness and dissatisfaction with the problems and prospects of art museums intensified by what has happened in the last decade and what appears to be the future of that controversial institution in the twilight of the 20th century.

Museum sales desks increase their offerings of disposable trash while the administration appeals for funds to maintain the "permanent" collections. New museum buildings proliferate, offering "exciting" and vast spaces for people viewing while restricting the collections to corners or peripheries. These are only two major examples of the continuing misunderstanding, sometimes willful, of the functions of an art museum in society.

I would not disagree with anyone objecting to the style of the essay; as to the substance, it seems to me even more true today than at the time of writing. Δ



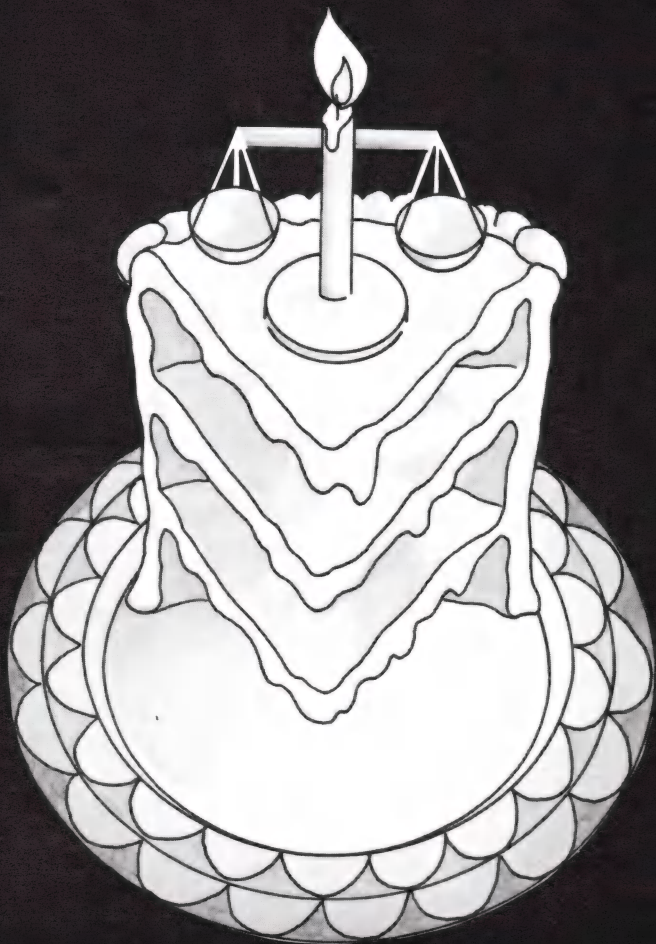
# Into the Contentious Mainstream

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## The Late 1970s

As the 1970s came to a close, there were articles in MUSEUM NEWS about issues still under active debate today. Many were the result of the growing public countenance—and public accountability—of museums. We have chosen three examples: historical perspectives in outdoor history museums, the scholar vs. the business executive as art museum director, and the legal and regulatory complexities that make museums inextricably part of what Stephen Weil calls “the contentious mainstream of American life.”

The magazine continues in this vein today, as more articles are devoted to museums’ relationship with the world around them. The sense of entanglement is giving way to a new feeling of active participation, and that bodes well for the future.





# It Wasn't That Simple

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Thomas J. Schlereth

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*The social history phenomenon was just gathering steam when Thomas Schlereth wrote in 1978 about oversimplification of the past by history museums. As he says in his afterword, we should be proud of museums' progress. Six years later, we see a more concerted effort at research and interpretation of history with a more human dimension.*

*Thomas J. Schlereth is a professor and director of graduate studies in American studies at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent book, U.S. 40: A Roadscape of the American Experience, will be published this year by the Indiana Historical Society.*

Edward P. Alexander once called the historical museum village "a huge textbook of three-dimensional American history." Outdoor historical museums, like history textbooks, have proliferated in almost a geometric progression in the past three decades. Despite competition from numerous other forms of popular history—historical novels, films, television programs—historical texts and historical villages continue to exert an enormous influence on the average American's perception of the national past and on his understanding of history as a way of knowing.

An analysis of a typical outdoor historical museum as a "textbook" of American history demonstrates the obstacles that curators must overcome when using this museum format to interpret historical knowledge. It also partially accounts for the traditional indifference that most professional historians have had toward museums as potential research and teaching resources. To some academic historians, the "museumization" of American history produces many of the same distortions, inaccuracies and oversimplifications that result from history textbooks. . . .

Authors of history texts generally follow a chronology of the American past based primarily on the



*A costumed craftsman at Colonial Williamsburg demonstrates candle dipping.*

events of political or military history. Despite an excess of artifactual survivals that should force an extensive study of social, economic and cultural history, historical museums are prone to similar timeline interpretations that define all their activities as being either before or after the Revolutionary War or the Civil War. . . .

Modern history textbooks, moreover, often betray a second chronological fallacy to which historical museums also succumb: the assumption that American history is singularly progressive. Since their origins in the nationalistic fervor of the early 19th century, American textbooks have been the histories of winners, of individuals who succeeded in *The March of America*, *The Victory of Freedom* or *The Triumph of Democracy* (current text titles). Given their origins in the isolationism of two post-world war eras, the 1920s and the 1950s, it is not surprising that historical museum villages have been equally addicted to what Walter Muir Whitehill calls the "celebration rather than the cerebration of the American past." Villages, perhaps biased by the associational aura of the houses of the "great white men" that often form the nucleus of their sites, tend to champion an inevitable evolution of democratic principles, a glorious series of



technological advancements and a continual rise in the American standard of living. Museum villages are not highly populated with Loyalists or Luddites, Anti-Federalists or Knights of Labor, Molly Maguires or Copperheads.

Various observers naturally accuse both textbooks and museum villages of being overly patriotic. . . . Of course, sophisticated curators are aware that cultural nationalism is probably endemic to their sites.

They might also consider their installations as evidence of what Robert Bellah and other sociologists define as the "American civil religion." Outdoor museums are historical shrines to which visitors are beckoned to make pilgrimages, particularly on national holy days (Memorial Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving) when the American democratic faith is reiterated in numerous secular homilies. Historical villages often inculcate, in ritual and symbol, a worship of the national scriptures (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution) as well as the Republic's civic saints, prophets and martyrs (Revolutionary and Civil War heroes). The folk religion that Will Herberg summarized as "the American way of life" pervades many exhibits and much interpretation. . . .

When Williamsburg's restorers decided in the 1930s that colonial history terminated in 1800, and all structures or additions built thereafter had to be stripped away, a museological practice of enormous influence was inaugurated. Selective preservation, restoration and reconstruction in a museum village, like selective arrangement of chapters and the number of pages allotted in a textbook, promote a discontinuous perspective on the past. Moreover, this practice often deliberately denigrates the excluded historical epochs as inferior and unworthy of study and understanding. Consider, for instance, how little attention is given, either in textbooks or in historical museum villages, to the era 1660-1730, the so-called "glacial age" of American history.

Plotting change across time—the historian's *raison d'être*—is done in textbooks and historical museums with a dogmatic certainty that unnerves the professional historian. Textbook authors rely on the simple linear order of their chapters to show change across time; museum curators resort to simplistic, single-factor explanations in exhibitions designed to demonstrate historical change. Both historical genres are methodologically prejudiced to show only develop-



"The American way of life" greets visitors to Williamsburg, Virginia, who ride in horse-drawn carriages through the peaceful streets of the 18th-century capital.



ment, not decline; neither is informed by the abundant literature on the difficulties of explaining and communicating historical change currently surfacing among historiographers and philosophers of history. . . .

Curators rely too heavily on craft demonstrations to give a visitor some sense of change, of history as process. Unfortunately such demonstrations are often themselves static, providing the viewer with little awareness of shifts in technology, materials or what Page Talbott calls the changing "ethnography of the artisan." . . .

Change in history is often caused by conflict. Yet textbooks and museums remain lodged in the "consensus" historiography of the 1950s. Historical museum villages are still, with a few exceptions, remarkably peaceable kingdoms, planned communities with overmanicured landscapes or idyllic small towns where the entire populace lives in harmony. The visitor to such sites, who usually does not see the artifacts of convict laborers, domestic servants, hired hands or slaves in the statistical proportion in which such material culture would have cluttered most communities, comes away from the museum village with a romanticized, even utopian perspective of the popularly acclaimed "good old days."

Deliberate utopian ventures constitute an inordinately large proportion of American outdoor history museums. There are more Shaker villages in the United States than there are Shakers. Unfortunately, the acute social and religious radicalism (and ostracism) of these and other dissenters (now ironically organized into a National Historic Communal Societies Association) is never adequately portrayed in the 20th-century restorations of their lifestyles. In fact, more often than not, the once bitterly maligned countercultures of earlier eras have been homogenized into respectable middle-class cultural establishments.

Homogeneity pervades American history textbooks, in part because of pressure from school boards, in part because their authors tend to plagiarize from one another, but particularly because they have traditionally omitted large, usually documentarily inarticulate, components of the population in their historical surveys. The same holds true for museum villages. Despite the increased scholarship and availability of materials on racial and ethnic minorities, both historical texts and villages are still largely populated by white, Anglo-Saxon, nondenominational Protestant males. . . .

Similarly, trends in American religious history have not been translated into museum village installations that, while they invariably have a single Georgian or Federal white clapboard church, are



*The textbook image of women's work: Demonstrators at Shaker-town at Pleasant Hill spin fiber into linen using a saxony wheel.*

hardly suggestive of the extensive religious pluralism and conflict that existed in most American communities.

To be sure, women's work has been depicted, but only that centering around the home and hearth, particularly in kitchens furnished with more equipment than any cook could ever have used. . . . If it is any comfort to museum curators, textbooks have been even more resistant to women's studies. . . .

Museum curators, like textbook writers, do not have access to a highly developed scholarly apparatus of systematic, collective research procedures common to most professional disciplines. Primary research is ongoing in museum villages with research divisions and in museum-university related graduate programs. Unpublished inventories, correspondence, account books and other manuscript materials are now used frequently in museum interpretation. Unfortunately those who do this research do not always mount the exhibit or determine how much of their research is to be used and in what fashion. Nor is this research sufficiently shared. There is no national network for collecting, cataloging, publishing and distributing it; there is no abstracting service to condense it to manageable format, convenient to distribute and to retrieve. Since most studies in American material culture are master's degree papers, the extensive graduate research done in programs like



those at Winterthur, Cooperstown or Hagley is not listed in *Dissertation Abstracts* and consequently is not available in either microfilm or photocopy. . . .

Historical museum villages and textbooks lack both footnotes and bibliographies. Neither the historical scholar nor the curator, much less the interested museum visitor, is encouraged in most outdoor museums to consult the elaborate (and generally unavailable) staff research reports, laboratory analyses of artifacts, minutes of curator-designer meetings or the registrar's records that are the documentation on which the interpretation of a historical environment is based. . . .

There are still no regular scholarly mechanisms whereby individuals can get behind the facade of an exhibit, restoration or reconstruction. The credibility and historical authenticity of such background research cannot be adjudicated by professional peers; it cannot be a base on which other scholars might build further research; it cannot be a cross-reference to parallel work in the field. Although historical museum village installations are indeed curatorial publications, they have no footnotes and are never used as footnotes to other publications.

Curators may argue that their guidebooks, research studies or craft demonstration leaflets perform this function. Although some local research studies and craft series do have bibliographical leads, there is no comprehensive, documented catalog or interpretive analysis of a major historical museum village and its study collections. At best, most guidebooks are mementos rather than monographs, souvenirs rather than reference and interpretive works for the library shelf.

Historical museum villages, like most textbooks,

do not have prefaces, forewords or introductory statements. In fact, for all the public knows, historical museum installations are self-generating since curators are usually never credited with authorship. No standard vehicle exists that allows the textbook historian or historical curator to explain his objectives, delineate his hypotheses or articulate the problems he may have encountered in researching the data, organizing it and communicating it to a wider audience. Neither author has an appropriate public forum in which to admit his reservations about certain aspects of his interpretation or to explain the documentation that supports controversial judgments or unfamiliar facts. Consequently village visitors, as well as their volunteer guide interpreters, have no clues as to the methodological difficulties or evidential gaps in an exhibition, and almost inevitably regard the published result as the definitive study on the subject.

Professional historians, of course, are not as easily convinced. In their work they depend on peer review in order to appraise completed scholarship and stimulate further research through constructive criticism. . . . If the historical museum profession were to follow suit, it would escape another of the critical comparisons made here with history textbooks, which do not usually receive professional peer review. . . .

Peer review prompts interpretation revision. . . . Without such revisionism, museums and textbooks lack both a historical tradition and a tradition of historical analysis. . . . Both genres of historical interpretation . . . would profit if their practitioners thought more seriously about their philosophical assumptions and professional practices. If museum curators took more time to explore the epistemological questions of chronology, causation, periodization and gen-

*Saying the blessing at an early 19th-century Thanksgiving dinner at Old Sturbridge Village*





eralization, the quality of interpretation in historical villages would be more sophisticated, but still comprehensible to the average visitor. . . . As curators can learn from the methods of academic historians, teaching historians can profit from the scholarship of museum professionals.

Before both professions is what American historian William Hesselstine, in *The Present World of History*

(1958), called "the challenge of the artifact." "[How can] artifacts be made into historical facts? By what method can they be examined? What internal evidence can they produce to aid in the search for historical truth?" For, as Hesselstine rightly saw, "until artifacts can be subjected to internal criticism and made to bear their witness, the task of historical methodology is unfinished."

## Afterword, 1984

I wrote the preceding essay in the wake of the American Bicentennial. I prepare this brief coda in the early years of a decade devoted to the 200th anniversary of the American Constitution. Anticipating some of the chauvinistic manifestations that the next bicentennial will undoubtedly elicit, I again find myself wondering how history museums and history textbooks will portray the Constitutional era in particular, and American history in general, during the decade of the 1980s.

I am persuaded that history museums will do their work with increasing sophistication. Not so textbooks. Their authors seem almost forever doomed, much like Sisyphus, to roll their hard little rock of historical dogma up and down the minds of bored students everywhere. Many history museums, on the other hand, are venturing forth onto new interpretive frontiers and demonstrating the intellectual openness and methodological savvy that I called for in 1978.

How and why is this happening? In brief, many history museums are now seriously reexamining both their professional activities and the philosophical assumptions involved in their conceptualization and communication of the past. In professional terms, new forums such as the *Museum Studies Journal* have appeared, joining the ranks of publications such as *MUSEUM NEWS* and *History News* in a common aspiration to publish more rigorous museological research and more analytical museum history. In addition to this growing liveliness in professional literature, exhibit catalogs are occasionally evolving into major research publications. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts' three-volume catalog, *New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century* (1982), is an example. History museums still need, however, more critical peer review of their publications in all forms—exhibits, monographs, catalogs. My hope for a regular exhibition review section in each major museum journal has yet to be realized. Only *Technology and*

*Culture* provides the history museum profession with exhibition reviews containing a critical edge.

Reevaluation of philosophical premises, I suppose, has been largely a result of the social history juggernaut. In fact, many institutions are becoming as deeply committed to the social history gospel as they once were to a political history ideology. Colonial Williamsburg, for example, an institution of which I was critical in 1978, now contends to be the major museum research center for the interpretation of 18th-century colonial society. At 19th-century sites such as Sturbridge, Greenfield Village and Old World Wisconsin, we now see a perspective on the past that is more diverse in human motivation, more representative of actual human populations and more complex in its explanation of human behavior.

Despite these achievements, interpreting certain dimensions of the American experience is still problematic for many history museums. The complicated and often controversial role of religion, for instance, is not researched or communicated in ways appropriate to its importance. The presentation of difficult historical issues such as conflict, failure, dissent or prejudice also continue as interpretive challenges that we have not adequately met. And questions perennial to the historian's craft—the nature of causation, the rationale for periodization, the differing velocities of change or the limits of historical explanation—still haunt our best efforts.

Finally, I think my earlier insistence that one of the most urgent tasks of contemporary historical scholarship is to explore, both in the museum and in the academy, the full potential of material culture evidence, remains as demanding an imperative now as it was six years ago. If museum and academic historians, with American history museums as research laboratories, can join in expanding historical understanding through a sensitive and systematic study of the past's objects, this may be the history museum's most vital contribution to historical methodology in the remaining decades of this century. However, I should add that just as we have come to realize that the past wasn't that simple, we can be certain that the effort to comprehend the measure and the meaning of its material universe won't be easy. Δ





*In this 1970s photo, Edward Alexander talks with Otto Wittmann and G. Carroll Lindsay.*

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## Into the Contentious Mainstream

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# The Director

## Scholar and Businessman, Educator and Lobbyist

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*Alan Shestack*

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*Who should run museums? The traditional route to the museum directorship is changing, as the times demand a different approach to management. Some contend that the scholar-director can't lead the museum enterprise; others maintain that both scholarly credentials and managerial skills are essential for informed decision-making. The debate that was heating up in 1978, when Alan Shestack wrote this article, continues today.*

*Alan Shestack is the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery and current president of the Association of Art Museum Directors.*

**T**he director of an art museum in the United States today must be master of many skills and talents. He must function as art historian and connoisseur, businessperson and fund-raiser, diplomat, politician, lobbyist, personnel manager, publisher, architectural consultant, restaurateur, educator, after-dinner speaker and—as one director recently described his role—resident psychoanalyst. Until recent decades, the museum director had only to be a connoisseur and “gentleman,” and had few additional professional obligations, primarily



those closely connected to his social life—wooing collectors in order to build a fine museum collection and establishing and maintaining rapport with the trustees. One such director is known to have remarked that the museum's obligation to the public is met by merely opening the doors at 10 A.M. and making sure they are locked again at 5 P.M.

This kind of narrow or even cynical attitude is no longer tolerable, even in jest. America's museums have changed dramatically since World War II. Public programs and participatory activities have come to occupy at least as much of the time, energy and thought of the museum staff as the traditional functions of collecting and research. Monies available from local and state government agencies, foundations and the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities make it incumbent upon the museum to place special emphasis on didactic exhibitions, on wider utilization of museum collections and on visitor orientation.

In the recent past, one of the basic areas of misunderstanding between art museum directors and boards of trustees has been the question of the museum's function, especially the degree to which the museum should try to attract and serve a broader audience. In some cases the director, concerned solely with collecting and with the quest for distinguished acquisitions, has preferred to ignore pressing social issues and has allowed the status quo to prevail, by default. More frequently, however, it is the board that views the museum as its own private preserve and is either oblivious to or chooses not to confront the political realities that the director faces daily. Although changing sources of income as well as changing constituencies would seem to call for changes in the makeup of museum boards (adding representatives of schools and universities, for example), the boards (often self-perpetuating) have resisted relinquishing power and prestige.

To be fair to trustees, one must point out that museum staffs often assume ideological resistance from trustees and have failed to communicate their concerns effectively or to risk trustee displeasure by pointing out the moral issues inherent in the governance of public institutions. The director's problem is that he should serve the entire community but must, for financial and political reasons, take his cues from a small body of self-appointed trustees.

An even more frequent area of conflict between boards and directors is in the realm of fiscal management. Boards often question how much the director understands about administrative matters. If the board does not have confidence in the director as a manager, its members are not likely to respect the

kind of financial judgments the director makes and may view him as a spendthrift who carelessly wastes the money they are told it is *their* responsibility to raise.

Art museums are, of course, turning to new sources of funding and no longer depend on a single trustee or group of trustees (or any other *single* source) for financial support. Just when costs of maintenance and operation have escalated, funding from traditional pri-

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**As museums increasingly come to depend on public funding and a broad base of support, they will obviously become more responsive to public needs.**

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vate sources has, in fact, decreased. It is possible that the greater democratization of our museums has something to do with the waning enthusiasm of a number of former donors. In the past some wealthy people have, consciously or not, thought of the museum as a kind of esthetic country club. As museums increasingly come to depend on public funding and a broad base of support, they will obviously become more responsive to public needs. The director's role—a tricky balancing act, to be sure—will be to retain the interest and financial backing of the museum's traditional supporters and also to serve the general community without lowering esthetic standards or allowing public programs and educational activities to push aside research and scholarship, responsible exhibition techniques and conservation. Despite new public-oriented programs, there must still be comfortable, attractive, quiet galleries where museum visitors may contemplate the collections without the competition of recorded lectures or distracting or oversimplified videotapes or slide shows. In the long run, the vitality and validity of public programs will depend on the quality and condition of the collection, the heart of any art museum and its *raison d'être*.

As museum collections expand, of course, the need for added exhibition space, adequate, well-lit and ventilated conservation laboratories and air-conditioned and humidity-controlled storage facilities becomes a high priority. Often the director must settle a dispute between a curator who wishes to exhibit more of his collection, an educator who wants the very same space for a seminar room and the museum librarian who claims there is no more shelf space in the museum's reference library. The director must also find a way to accommodate and provide work space for the editors and designers who were not part





*Paul Sachs trained a generation of art museum directors in his course at Harvard.*

of museum staffs when most American museums were originally designed.

The public's access to the objects is often the loser in this competition for space. Some museums even rent commercial warehouses some distances from the main museum building to store their overflow collections. The important point is that it is the director whose role it is to settle "territorial disputes" and all other controversies within the museum.

For many of these reasons, there are few art museums in America that have not recently been forced to expand, to build new wings or renovate existing structures to provide urgently needed office space, temporary exhibition space, functional dust-free and environment-controlled storerooms. Most art museum directors have had to learn quickly to become architectural specialists. This involves helping the board select an architect, providing the architect with the functional specifications of the project and communicating daily with contractors and subcontractors. Since the architect will want to design a "memorable" rather than a functional building, and since the donors who contributed to the building fund want a voice in the decisions, the director must be the spokesman for the museum's professional staff, which usually knows from daily experience, if not from years of frustration, what is truly needed and what will function best. Indeed, a major role of the director in all aspects of museum life is that of *facilitator*; he is the one individual who listens to all concerned parties and then on the basis of experience and judgment formulates a position to present to the trustees. The success or failure of the museum often depends on how clearly the director perceives a problem and all of its ramifications, how well he under-

stands the viewpoints of all parties and how well he is able to articulate these positions to the board.

The question is, How does one prepare for a museum directorship? Surprisingly, in this era of specialized education, there is no prescribed route to an art museum directorship, no specific course of study in which one can enroll to obtain some sort of certification. . . . Just as there is no strictly predetermined course of study for art museum directors, there is, likewise, no acknowledged list of professional qualifications for these positions. . . .

This brings us to the crucial and timely question of whether museums should be headed by administrators (who are not art historians) or by "art people." If one assumes that the kind of director who is selected by the trustees reflects the goals and priorities of the museum, then the choice of a business administrator makes a very different statement than the choice of an art historian. Administrators who have not studied art history and who do not have a deep, abiding love for the art objects in their care are likely to make uninformed decisions that do not further the mission of communicating the art of the past and present. To do this effectively and with integrity, the chief administrator must be sensitive to art historical issues. It is not enough for an administrator to turn to subordinates for advice on acquisitions, conservation, exhibitions or publications. Effective administration is essential, but the role of administration is to enable museums to serve their primary purpose, to educate and to provide enjoyment in the visual arts. It is of

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little value to have a smooth-running ship if it does nothing but pursue a meaningless course. . . .

In years past, the "idiosyncratic" museum was often led by an idiosyncratic, personally dynamic scholar-connoisseur who encouraged collecting and thrived on appreciation of objects—a person who was as much at home in the library as he was in the homes of important collectors. As times changed, and cultural institutions reflected those changes, a new hybrid director emerged, one who combined a predilection for the arts with sensitivity to practical matters. The pendulum today, however, seems to be swinging



to the furthest extreme, as some boards of trustees, in their frustration over the serious financial problems that beset nearly all art museums, have turned to the pure administrator who, because he knows little about art, will not have his head turned by an expensive masterpiece or a costly exhibition proposal.

While fiscal and managerial aspects are certainly important, the art museum *must* remain an institution in which esthetic values are primary and permanent. Effective museum management requires a full understanding of the purposes of the museum, a clear sense of esthetic standards and sound artistic judgment. . . .

All museum planning and decision making, including those issues which appear to be purely eco-

nomic, are at base *artistic* decisions. . . . [They] are ultimately decisions about *quality*, and although there are managerial problems in museums, *museums are not businesses* in the strict sense of the word, and managerial decisions should always be in the service of quality programs. . . .

The problems discussed here are not just theoretical but reflect something of a nationwide crisis in art museum management. Several major art museums were without directors during the past year, and it was not as if their boards did not try to identify and hire appropriate people. Indeed, there seem to be . . . few professionals of acknowledged directorial caliber. . . .

This . . . has something to do with the changing tides in museum management. In years past, directors



Association of Art Museum Directors meeting, Winterthur, Delaware, 1958. Row 1: Perry Rathbone, Russell Plimpton, Edward Dwight, Charles Cunningham, Edgar Schenck, Laurence Sickman. Row 2: George Stout, Hermann Williams, Charles Buckley, (unidentified), Agnes Mongan, John Maxon, Richard Brown. Row 3: Charles Nagel, Otto Wittmann, William Milliken, Adelyn Breeskin, Grace Morley, Richard Fuller, Edgar Preston Richardson, Edward King. Row 4: Lee Malone, Martin Baldwin, Warren Beach, Joseph Fraser, Charles Sawyer, Henri Marceau, Eugene Kingman, Franklin Beibel, Katherine Coffey, Charles Montgomery. Row 5: Frederick B. Adams, Jr., James Rorimer, Fred S. Bartlett, Bartlett Hayes, Wilbur Peat, Archibald Gibson Wenley, Charles Parkhurst, Robert Parks. Row 6: Harvard Arnason, John S. Thacher, (unidentified).



were trained as scholar-connoisseurs and learned their managerial skills only after they were on the job. They were not, however, initially hired as managers, but rather as people of refined taste. However, it may be that just at the time when boards of trustees were beginning to place greater emphasis on managerial skills, those kinds of connoisseurs who might have been acceptable under the old rules were suddenly "unqualified." . . . A personnel vacuum was created that somehow had to be filled. It is more a quirk of fate than a commentary on expertise that so many younger people are now in directorial positions once reserved for older and more mature people.

The real issue is what course those men and women

who are still in school should take if they aspire to becoming museum administrators, since they obviously cannot depend on another favorable historical accident. As it now stands, it is not at all clear whether they would be better off going to business school or to graduate school in art history, or some combination of the two. At this moment, in practical terms, a middle road would seem advisable, even though museums will suffer if the directors of the future are insufficiently trained in art history. Prompt resolution of the present debate over how art museums should be managed, and by whom, would set clear guideposts for the next generation of scholars, managers and trustees.

## Afterword, 1984

Only six years have passed since this article appeared, so it may be a bit soon to assess subsequent developments or detect trends. One major concern I had in 1978 was that museum boards, in their desire for greater financial stability, would turn to professional administrators (museum presidents) and in so doing put traditional museum values at risk. Since 1978 at least one major art museum has experimented with a paid presidency and abandoned it. Two others have established administrative structures in which the president is coequal with the museum director in the institutional hierarchy and shares administrative responsibility and authority. From all reports, these teams are functioning well.

A joint leadership system *can* work if the roles are clearly defined. The administrator/president oversees fund raising, the management of financial resources and the nonprofessional staff, legal issues and such nuts-and-bolts matters as security and building maintenance. The director, trained in art history, makes the "esthetic" decisions—those regarding exhibitions, acquisitions, conservation, education and publications. With such a team, the museum might well be able to carry on even better than before and—to give credit to those new presidents who have energetically sought new funding sources—with added financial resources and a stronger balance sheet.

If people of goodwill communicate easily with each other and are committed to making something work, then the formal structure of the institution may be relatively unimportant. The danger remains, of course, that an administrator/president may soon want to have a decisive voice in acquisitions and other curatorial matters. In addition, business people

on boards may take the president more seriously than the director: business sense will always seem more practical than a dedication to art! It is not surprising that the vast majority of art museum directors are strongly opposed to a nonart person serving as chief executive officer of an art museum. The question is whether this opposition is due to personal anxieties over job security and status or springs from a genuine concern for the character and future of America's museums.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, many younger museum professionals are preparing themselves to be more business oriented. Many art museum directors report that they have recently taken intensive business courses in financial and personnel management. This trend will have profound implications for the future of American art museums, which have generally organized exhibitions and collected objects on the basis of curatorial enthusiasm and expertise. As decision making at the upper level—whether by administrators or by curators-turned-administrators—becomes more business oriented, the character of the museum will shift. Its purchases, exhibitions and personnel will reflect box office appeal, political considerations, advertising possibilities and attractiveness to corporate sponsors. The offbeat or eccentric exhibition proposal, the scholarship and research of traditional curators and all the other undramatic but essential aspects of museum work will likely be jeopardized.

No one denies that it is important for museum directors to be effective administrators and to be well informed about business practices. But judgment in artistic matters, broad experience in the visual arts and the ability to maintain high standards in collecting and museum programming remain the basic requirements of a good director. These are the rare but essential skills that will ensure the quality, and success, of our institutions. Δ



# Vincible Ignorance

## Museums and the Law

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Stephen E. Weil

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*Through the 1970s and early 1980s, MUSEUM NEWS has reflected a significant part of the natural maturation of the museum community: the realization that museums are not exempt from the external factors that affect the operation of any complex institution, large or small. Perhaps this is an indication that museums are accepting the inexorable connection between their traditional responsibilities and the world around them. This 1979 article is a good example.*

*Stephen E. Weil is deputy director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. "Vincible Ignorance," first published in MUSEUM NEWS, is included in Beauty and the Beasts: On Museums, Art, the Law, and the Market, a collection of Weil's speeches and essays published last year by Smithsonian Institution Press.*

Let me begin with three propositions: First, that the tangle of legal considerations in which the day-to-day operation of American museums has become increasingly enmeshed is not a transient phenomenon. While we have some reason to hope that the federal regulatory process—one of the most constricting of the various strands that weave through this tangle—may soon be subject to some relaxation, there is little prospect that, for the immediate future, we will see any significant reduction in the number of ongoing museum activities that continue to involve one legal concern or another.

Second, that the day-to-day responsibility for dealing with these legal concerns—for seeing to it not only that a museum is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, but also that it is able successfully to defend such claims as may be asserted against



it by government officials, by aggrieved employees, by visitors and by otherwise interested outside parties—falls squarely on the director.

And third, that we have reached a point where it would be the height of folly—or, beyond folly, where it would constitute culpable negligence and an abuse of their trust—for those entrusted with the well-being of our museums to attempt to deal with these legal considerations without the benefit of competent professional counsel.

Over the past 15 years we have watched, almost spellbound, the seemingly inexorable advance of a mass of regulation, and federal regulation in particular, that today touches virtually every aspect of museum operations. The questions we may ask a prospective employee, the objects we may choose to collect, the tools we provide to our workers, the temperature at which we maintain our galleries and the width of the aisles between exhibition cases—all of these, and far more, may today be subject to one or another law or regulation.

It is encouraging that . . . we are seeing some recognition that this regulatory process may have gotten

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out of hand. All too frequently, regulations have been adopted without due regard for their economic or administrative impact on small and medium-sized organizations or without consideration that the degree of regulatory complexity might appropriately be scaled to the magnitude of those who are to be regulated. . . .

That it is the director of a museum who must bear the day-to-day responsibility for dealing with such regulations and other legal concerns is a harsh proposition and one that some might question. Certainly, the *ultimate* responsibility for all of the actions of a museum must be borne by its board of trustees or other governing body. And certainly, too, there are some things, particularly legal questions arising from the conduct of the board or its members, that clearly are beyond the director's control.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is no practical or desirable way to involve the board of trustees in that multitude of day-to-day decisions that constitutes the ongoing operation of a museum. In some areas—personnel or collections management, for ex-

ample—the board, working with the director, may adopt formal, written policies that can resolve a substantial number of day-to-day situations. Nonetheless, such policies will still need to be interpreted, events will occur that no one has anticipated, and the law, ever susceptible to change, may always change faster than the policies can be changed.

Below the director, there is no one with so comprehensive a knowledge of all the museum's activities. Above the director, there is no one whose attention is focused exclusively on the museum's daily operation. Given everything else with which a director must deal, the responsibility for safeguarding the museum's legal posture does seem a cruel additional burden. And yet, unless the director is to abdicate the management of the museum, there is no other place it can rest except in—or at least very near—his office.

More self-evident, I think, is my third proposition: that a museum would be derelict in the extreme if it sought to deal with the tangle of legal considerations within which it must operate without the benefit of competent professional counsel. We are dealing here with matters that, if mishandled, can be very costly to a museum in terms of litigation, in terms of potential damages, in terms of its reputation and its consequent support in the community, and in terms of the energies that must inevitably be diverted from what should be the museum's central concerns.

Our laws are too complex, and the consequences of misunderstanding them too grave, to make it thinkable that the legal aspects of museum management should be based on anything less than the best available professional advice. . . . Some provision must be made to provide our present directors with regularly available access to competent professional counsel.

Such access must, moreover, be provided as a matter of course. The need for counsel must be recognized as a normal incident to the management of museums and not (as it may perhaps in the past have been) as the remedy for some directorial malfunction. If expense is to be involved, it should be anticipated as a normal cost of museum operation and provided for in the annual budget. If the board must be consulted as to the means by which legal services are to be provided, such consultation should be had in advance. Above all, the director's access to professional counsel should be timely. For all of those good reasons we crystallize in maxims about closing barn doors and stitches in time, it is *before*, not *after*, a problem may surface that professional counsel can be of greatest value to a museum director and of the least ultimate expense to the museum. . . .

For almost all museums, . . . legal services must in all likelihood continue to be provided by outside



counsel. There are many ways in which this may be done. Outside counsel may be paid or voluntary. It may be provided by members of the board or by others. General counsel may be retained for all museum purposes, or special counsel may be employed for special purposes. Counsel may be provided by an affiliate organization or even, on occasion, by one or another of a museum's insurance carriers. And finally, of course, a museum may use any combination of these. . . .

It is not enough, however, for a museum director to be provided with competent legal counsel. The main thing is to use it well. But knowing how to use legal counsel effectively may still not be enough. The initial requirement is to know *when* to use it. If a mu-

seum director does not know when to turn to professional counsel, the rest is irrelevant. Unless counsel is consulted, there is nothing that counsel, no matter how competent, can do.

Here, then, is the core of our problem. How is a museum director, not an attorney but charged nevertheless with day-to-day responsibility for guiding the museum through a tangle of legal complexities, to recognize those situations that require reference to outside professional counsel? . . . With few exceptions, there is no body of law that is particular to museums. There are few laws—not even the cornerstone of our tax exemption, the blessed 501(c)(3)—that even mention museums, whether to include them or exclude them. Museums are complex entities, the various aspects or activities of which are subject to various bodies of law that, for the most part, are not interrelated. . . . For each of a museum's characteristic aspects or activities, there is a particular body of law applicable, one to which the museum is, for the most part, subject in common with a host of other organizations or individuals who share that same characteristic. What are some of these characteristics?

Virtually every museum, for example, is an employer. As such it will, depending on the number of people it regularly employs, fall under a body of state and federal laws common to all employers that may be similarly classified. Many of the same museums that have employees also import objects or specimens of foreign origin. In doing so, the body of law to which they subject themselves is altogether different from that which regulates their relationship with their employees. Moreover, depending upon just what it is they import—pre-Columbian architectural fragments or Icelandic scrimshaw—the group with which they will be classified as subject in common to this law may differ entirely from that with which they were classified as employers. It might, for instance, include private collectors who have no employees.

To extend these illustrations: Many museums accept grants or contracts from the federal government. In doing so, they subject themselves to still a different series of regulations that, again, will be common to every organization—regardless of whether it is a university, hospital, library or other museum—accepting similar support. Many museums are also private nonprofit organizations governed by boards of trustees. Here, other bodies of law—in some cases analogous to those applicable to business corporations, in others rooted in the traditional rules of private trust administration—may be applicable.

Beyond this, a museum may also be a merchant, it may maintain public premises, it may be an instrumentality of the federal government or of a state,





county or municipal government, it may be a publisher. The list could be extended. And, for each such characteristic, the museum intersects with another body of law. If a museum operates a restaurant, the fact that paintings by Pablo Picasso hang in its galleries will not exempt it from coverage by the same local health regulations that govern Piero's Pizzeria across the street. . . .

To suggest that museum directors should reach such a basic understanding of how it is that the law does affect museums is not to suggest that they ought to become amateur lawyers. That might be worse than having no counsel at all. The point, rather—to return finally to our three opening propositions—is this: Given that museums must, now and for the foreseeable future, operate in a broad context of legal considerations, given that the director must bear the day-to-day responsibility for dealing with these legal considerations, and given that—if he is properly to discharge that responsibility—the director must have the benefit of adequate legal services, the directors of museums have a double obligation. First, in conjunc-

tion with their boards they must see to it that provision is made to give them regular access to the services of professional counsel. Second, once such counsel is available to them, they must be sensitive enough to learn how and when such counsel can best be used.

Too often, in the past, too many museums have had more adequate procedures for ordering legal pads—a countersigned purchase order, perhaps, or some form of requisition—than they have had for providing their directors with needed legal services. Too often, in the past, too many museums have used legal services as their pound of cure when, at a fraction of the expense, such services might have been employed to provide a good many ounces of prevention. And too often, in the past, too many museums have seen their periodic entanglements with the law as puzzling exceptions to some long-standing privilege of living outside the contentious mainstream of American life.

As all of you must know by now, attitudes such as these are luxuries that none of us who care about the healthy survival of museums can any longer afford.

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## Afterword, 1984

Since this article was written, the "tangle" of legal considerations surrounding museums has only grown denser. During 1983 alone, New York State enacted an Artists' Authorship Rights bill with implications for museums (and particularly museum conservators) that remain unclear; California adopted a novel (albeit museum-inspired) legislative scheme permitting museums to dispose of borrowed objects whose lenders can no longer be located; and the Internal Revenue Service issued a flurry of technical advice memorandums (TAMs) that greatly expand the factors employed in determining whether specific objects offered for sale in a museum shop will be considered "related" to the museum's exempt purpose.

To deal with this thickening tangle, some additional museums—the total number, though, still remains small—have turned to in-house counsel. One such was the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, which created the staff position of general counsel in the fall of 1983. "We had to," says Harry S. Parker III, the director. "As the institution grew, we encountered more and more problems about exhibitions, acquisitions and government relations that required legal expertise." For most museums, however, in-house counsel is not yet a practical alternative. Below a certain size, the work generated would be insufficient

to keep such counsel fully occupied. At the same time, outside legal services continue to be costly.

It remains the director, then, who must bear the major day-to-day responsibility to see that a museum neither trips nor falls as it picks its way through the legal thicket. To the suggestions made in 1979 as to how this might best be done, I should add that a touch of good-humored ingenuity can also be helpful. To illustrate: Among the sales shops about which the IRS issued a TAM in 1983 was that of a major New England art museum. One group of objects it found "unrelated" (meaning their sale would give rise to taxable income) was chocolate mummies. While the museum *did* collect mummies, and while there *is* a general rule that reproductions of nonutilitarian collection objects will ordinarily be deemed educational and therefore related, the IRS was put off by the chocolate. This it deemed too ephemeral a medium to give these reproductions any lasting educational value.

Inspiration, though, saved the day. A sweet alternative presented itself. Simply by moving the chocolate mummies from its shop to its restaurant, the museum could instantly transform them from souvenirs to sustenance, from "unrelated" back to "related." Profits from their sale could again go untaxed. Most of the still-emerging legal concerns with which museums and their directors must cope will require more plodding solutions. Occasionally, though, you may be lucky enough to find one where such a grand leap of imagination can do the job. Δ



## The London Conference of ICOM

THOMAS W. LEAVITT

**T**wo hundred American museum professionals and trustees joined 800 of their colleagues from other countries in London last July at the 13th General Conference of the International Council of Museums, a nongovernmental professional organization serving as advisor to the United Nations. The meetings, under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the duke of Edinburgh, were held in the new Barbican Centre in the heart of Old London, and social events took place in museums throughout the city. As a neophyte to ICOM proceedings, I was curious to discover how museum people from all over the world could use such a forum to communicate with each other.

Informal communication began immediately upon our arrival and continued throughout the eight-day conference. Everywhere people were greeting friends and making new acquaintances, comparing experiences and exchanging observations on the state of museums in their respective countries. Formal communication was achieved through one day of plenary sessions, four days of international committee meetings and two days of a general assembly meeting to consider resolutions and to hold elections.

Remarks by the duke of Gloucester, the earl of Gowie (minister for the arts of Her Majesty's government) and the president of ICOM, Hubert Landais (director of the museums of France) inaugurated the first plenary session. The speakers—Guenrikh Popov, director of fine arts and monuments, Ministry of Culture, USSR; Brian Morris from the Museums and Galleries Commission, United Kingdom; Henrique



*Second plenary session, "Harnessing the Museum's Resources to Its Responsibilities." Left to right: Alfred Waldis, president, Swiss Transport Museum, Lucerne, Switzerland; John Kendall, director, Science Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Paul Perrot, director, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Marta de la Torre, projects coordinator, ICOM, Paris; Gunilla Cedrenius, SAMDOK program, Nordiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden*

Abranches, director of museums and the arts, Angola; and Basil Greenhill, director of the National Maritime Museum, London—spoke on subjects related to the conference's main theme, "Museums for a Developing World." Topics included "Inequality of Museum Provision throughout the World," "Museums and National Cultural Identity" and "The Special Demands Placed upon Museums by Their Users." The speeches were simultaneously translated into four languages, and written copies were also available. In general, the tone was optimistic and exhortative. Museums are vital cultural institutions in all countries, but much more must be done to improve museum resources in many regions, to assist museums to reflect the cultural and scientific achievements of each nation and to adapt museum programs to the new demands of their users.

In the afternoon the second plenary session was convened by Paul Perrot, now director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Speakers from Sweden, Australia, Switzerland and France continued to explore the theme of the conference, focusing on specific examples

and problems of museums in the last decades of the 20th century.

Valuable as the plenary sessions were, the real work was accomplished in the meetings of the international committees during the following four days. Twenty-one committees and seven affiliated organizations, representing museum disciplines ranging from archaeology and history to modern art, and museum functions ranging from security and conservation to education and public relations, held intensive meetings each day to exchange ideas and experiences in their areas of specialization. The key to taking full advantage of membership in ICOM is participation in the activities of one of these international groups. They are standing committees and meet several times between the triennial general conferences of ICOM. Most of them welcome new members. Even without belonging to one of the international committees, I was allowed to attend several sessions and even some of their social events, but I strongly recommend joining an appropriate group for

THOMAS W. LEAVITT is director of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, and president of the AAM.



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## INTERNATIONAL

full participation in the functions of ICOM as they have been established.\*

Social activities are an integral part of nearly all conferences, and the 13th ICOM General Conference was certainly no exception. In addition to many smaller parties for various international committees, there were major receptions for everyone at the National Gallery, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the County Hall and the British Museum. British hospitality has never been more gracious. Special events included a royal gala performance at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and tea at Buckingham Palace hosted by Queen Elizabeth.

In addition to the international committees, a number of other groups were meeting throughout the conferences. The executive council of ICOM, the advisory committee, the national committee chairmen and delegates from various international regions discussed common problems and opportunities.

The deliberations of all these diverse groups produced eight resolutions, which were adopted by the general assembly on August 1 and 2. The first three and the sixth resolutions urge national authorities and international development agencies to strengthen museums in their countries and regions, to serve broader segments of the population and to assist with museum staff development and training. The fourth resolution reaffirms the importance of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership

\*Each of ICOM's 21 international committees addresses a specific topic of concern to the museum profession. These topics are applied art, archeology and history (ICMAH), architecture and museum techniques, conservation, costume, documentation (CIDOC), education (CECA), ethnography (ICME), exhibition exchange (ICEE), fine arts (ICFA), glass, literature (ICLM), modern art (CIMAM), museology (ICOFOM), museum public relations (MPR), museum security (ICMS), musical instruments (CIMCIM), natural history, regional museums, science and technology, and training of personnel. Further information on ICOM's committees and applications for membership are available from the AAM/ICOM coordinator at the AAM.

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*Queen's House at the National Maritime Museum. Left to right: Basil Greenhill, director of the museum; Madame and Hubert Landais, president, ICOM; Gillian Lewis, assistant deputy director of the museum.*

of Cultural Property, adopted by UNESCO in 1970, and requests UNESCO to encourage the harmonization of appropriate legislation by its member states on a regional basis. Like most of the other resolutions, this one passed unanimously.

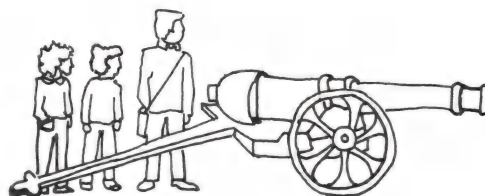
The fifth resolution, however, was much more controversial. It supports the return of cultural property to the country of origin and urges an open-minded attitude toward such requests. After heated debate this resolution, too, was passed, but with 10 abstentions.

The seventh resolution recommends special assistance for museums in the developing countries in Africa. The eighth and final resolution deals with the protection of the cultural heritage in countries under foreign or colonial occupation, urging museums to refrain from purchasing cultural objects from occupied countries and to report cases of illicit traffic in such objects. All of the resolutions were in keeping with the theme of the conference, and the improvement of museums in developing countries throughout the world was clearly the highest priority.

The general assembly also elected a new slate of officers and five new members of the ICOM executive council. Using the most elaborate ballot method I've ever seen, the following officers were elected: Geoffrey Lewis (United Kingdom), president; Alpha Oumar Konare (Mali) and Guenrikh Popov (USSR), vice-presidents; and Irene Bizot (France), treasurer. Paul Perrot was elected to serve on the executive council, along with members from Sweden, Brazil, Belgium and the Congo.

Although an ICOM General Conference is bound to be somewhat overwhelming at first, I highly recommend participating in the next one. Past and present members of the AAM/ICOM board attended the London conference in force and helped the rest of us to learn the ropes. Thomas M. Messer, elected vice-chairman of AAM/ICOM and a member of the executive council of ICOM for several years, was an effective leader of the American delegation, and his patient explanation helped us understand the complex structure of the only worldwide, comprehensive

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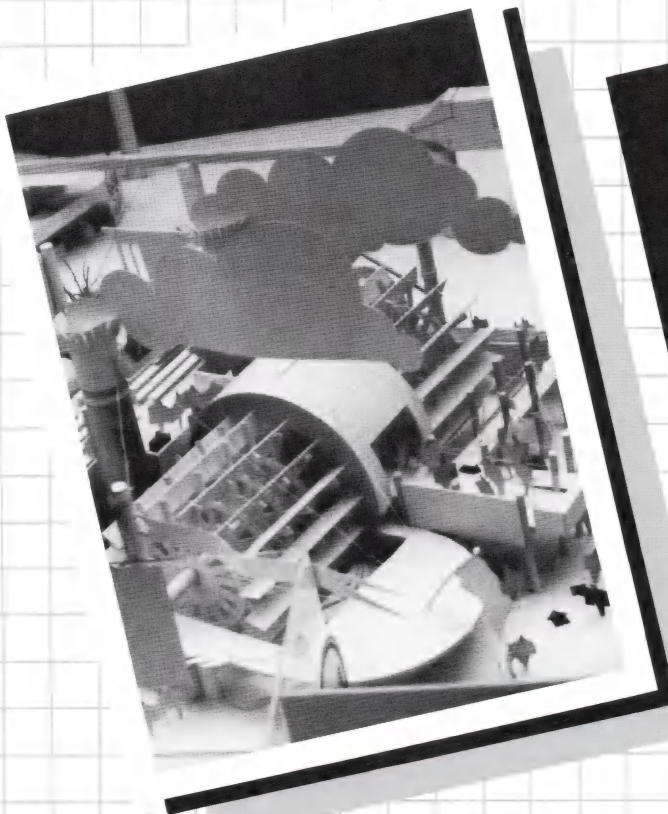
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## INTERNATIONAL

museum organization. I am convinced that all AAM members would gain a great deal of insight and practical museum information by joining AAM/ICOM and taking part in international committees and the gigantic triennial ICOM conferences.  $\Delta$



*Delegates at the National Maritime Museum reception*

### Resolutions Adopted by the 13th General Conference of the International Council of Museums, London, 1983

#### 1. Museums for a Developing World

*Emphasizing* the relevance and contribution of museums in a rapidly developing world as they respond to social and economic changes,

*Recommends* that museums:

- a. develop strategies to ensure that contemporary material culture in all parts of the world is collected and recorded for the benefit of future generations,
- b. continue to maintain and develop professional standards commensurate with their responsibilities in preserving the cultural heritage and providing public services,
- c. respond to the increasing need for the closest collaboration between museum professionals concerned with collections and their utilization in providing effective museum services,
- d. encourage research in association with appropriate agencies to provide a better understanding of the positive role of museums in contemporary society and in the future.

#### 2. Museums and Development

*Recognizing* that true development can only take place through an improvement in the quality of life, hence of the cultural dimension in each society, rooted in the cultural identity of each people,

*Underlining* that museums are the repositories of that cultural identity and the principal agents contributing to its understanding, protection and renewal,

*Stressing* that museums contribute also to the peaceful evolution of nations within the security provided by the comprehension of their own culture as well as that of others and to the assimilation of change by society,

*Recognizing* therefore that museums can make an important contribution to development,

*Noting* however that in low income countries there is an average of only one museum per 3 million inhabitants, a ratio which is one hundredth of that of industrialized countries,

*Deeply concerned* by this current situation,

*Urges* the national authorities in each country as well as the international community, and in particular the international and regional development agencies, to consider within their development programs and budgets increased support for the establishment and strengthening of museums as essential to the well-being of their communities.

#### 3. Inequality of Museum Provision

*Recalling* that a museum is an institution in the service of society and its development, as stated in the ICOM statutes, and that as a consequence exists to serve the community at large,

*Recognizing* that the majority of regional ethnic groups all over the world, and many minority groups in developed countries, do not have museums relevant to their group or community in their neighborhood,

*Noting* that although the support and further development of both existing and new national, regional and specialized museums is vital, such museums, often located in national or regional capitals, may not be able to meet fully the specific needs of local communities,

*Recommends* that in view of the importance of museums to society, every effort

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should be made by the competent authorities in each country, region or local community to develop appropriate museums specifically planned to serve both rural and urban populations deprived of adequate access to the cultural and educational benefits of museums.

### 4. Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Property

*Recalling* the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 16th session in Paris, 1970,

*Welcoming* the recent decisions of certain industrialized nations with a significant volume of trade in cultural property to pass legislation to prevent illicit trafficking in their countries,

*Noting* with concern that the illicit trafficking of cultural property continues,

*Urges* all ICOM members to:

- a. encourage their governments to ratify this convention where this has not already occurred,
- b. adopt national codes of ethics concerning the acquisition of cultural property,
- c. refrain from acquiring items for which there is no export license or other evidence of legal exportation,
- d. report to the proper authorities in the case of illicit appropriation,

*Further requests* UNESCO to encourage the harmonization of legislation of its member states on a regional basis and to ensure that the cultural heritage of contiguous states be mutually respected, noting particularly the success of the San Salvador Convention in Latin America.

### 5. Return of Cultural Property to Its Countries of Origin

*Acknowledging* the positive results achieved during the past triennial period, through professional and institutional co-

operation between museums, in promoting the return of cultural property to its countries of origin,

*Noting with satisfaction* that the initial distrust shown in certain countries with regard to the intentions and extent of the return of cultural property is disappearing and that, in the majority of cases, returns effected during the past three years were not motivated by political circumstances, but responded rather to considerations of a moral, cultural and scientific nature,

*Recognizing* that the cultural heritage is an essential element of identity for a given community,

*Noting* that, in order to fulfill the moral rights of people to recover significant elements of their heritage dispersed as a consequence of colonial or foreign occupation, it is necessary to pursue the professional efforts at the international level,

*Decides* that ICOM shall continue to:

- a. support actively, in an advisory capacity, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the return of cultural property to its countries of origin or its restitution in case of illicit appropriation,
- b. undertake studies to evaluate the needs of countries having lost a significant part of their respective heritages,

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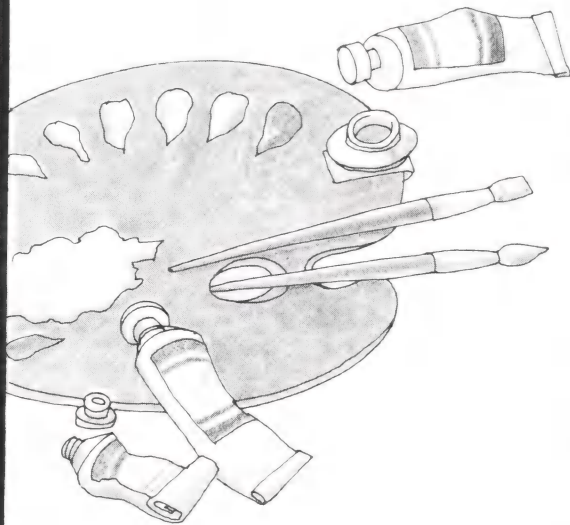


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## INTERNATIONAL

c. assist in the preparation of inventories of cultural property at the national and regional levels,

d. provide scientific data and information to all interested parties,

*Urges* ICOM members, both at the individual and institutional levels, to initiate dialogues with an open-minded attitude, on the basis of professional and scientific principles, concerning requests for the return of cultural property to the countries of origin,

*Calls attention* to the fact that many countries wishing to recover a significant part of their lost heritage need the assistance of the international community (through UNESCO, development agencies, bilateral or multilateral cooperation schemes, etc.) in order to improve or to build adequate human and technical resources and museum infrastructures.

### 6. Career Development and Management Training

*Recognizing* that the training, retraining and career development of museum staff should be regarded as an essential part of the policy and activities of every museum, however large or small, especially in the light of rapid social and technological change,

*Noting* the particular need for the development of advanced training programs in museum policy and management for museum directors and senior staff,

*Stressing* the need for the career development of museum staff at all levels, and acknowledging the significance of training as a sign of sound professionalism,

*Urges* all institutions in the museum field, including governing bodies, national museum organizations and international organizations, to give proper priority and adequate resources to these essential fields, particularly by providing the means for staff at all levels to participate in training and career development activities, including opportunities for study visits to other museums,

*Also requests* the major museums and related institutions in developed and developing countries to take into consideration the needs of the staff of smaller museums, to assist with such training and career development.

### 7. Museum Development in Africa

*Taking into consideration* the conclusions and recommendations formulated by the participants at the meetings of African national committees of ICOM held during the General Conference,

*Underlining* the importance for ICOM to count on the presence of its African members on the various bodies of the organization, and in particular in the executive council,

*Expressing* its satisfaction at the establishment of the Regional Training Centre in Niamey, Niger, and requesting that UNESCO will provide increased support for its activities in the future,

*Regretting*, however, that a similar training center does not yet exist in East Africa, in response to the needs existing in that subregion,

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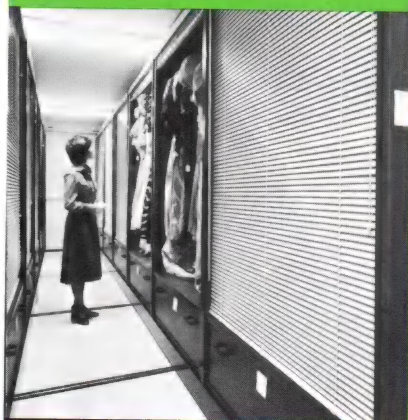


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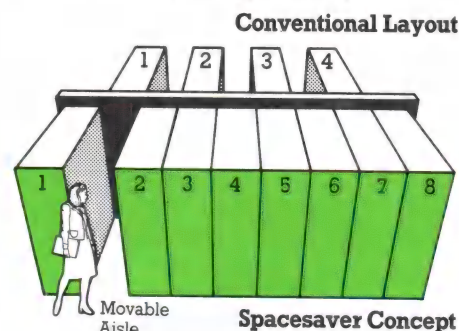
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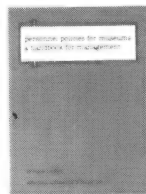
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## INTERNATIONAL

Stressing the urgency of undertaking the evaluation of the African museum needs in the fields of conservation and presentation of cultural heritage,

Recommends to UNESCO, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property and other international and regional organizations to consider in their programs:

- to give special attention to the training of museum personnel in Africa, including exhibit designers and craftsmen employed by museums and the creation of additional training centers with the highest priorities given to East Africa,
- the organization, on an annual basis, of subregional conservation workshops with the assistance of the International Committee for Conservation,
- the exchange of exhibitions between countries in the region and with countries of other parts of the world.

### 8. Cultural Heritage in Occupied Countries

Deeply concerned by the statements made by several participants about the situation of the cultural heritage in countries which are at present under foreign or colonial occupation,

Reminding the governmental authorities involved of their obligation to ensure the preservation of the national heritage and to respect its integrity, as required in the final act of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague, 1954) and by the moral principles accepted by the international community,

Decides as a priority to put at the disposal of the museum professional in the occupied countries all the technical resources of ICOM, in order to contribute to the preservation of such cultural heritage for their legitimate owners,

Requests that museums abstain from purchasing cultural objects from occupied countries, which in most cases will have been illegally exported or illicitly removed by the occupying power,

Finally requests ICOM members to report to the authorities cases of illicit traffic of cultural objects from occupied countries that may eventually be known to them. Δ



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7. The resident campaign manager should handle leadership gift solicitations personally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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# BOOKS

## Past, Present, East and West

Sherman E. Lee. New York, N.Y.: George Braziller, Inc., 1983. 224 pp., illus., hardbound, \$20.

Reviewed by James H. Duff

For those who believe that fine prose can and should be part of the literature of museums and art, *Past, Present, East and West* will be a rare pleasure. Seldom are we treated to such prose in museum literature and art-related publications. In an age when authors and editors, who assume that we will read through wordy trivia heaped upon only a few words of importance, allow thoughts aired in public to run on and on, it is refreshing to find the concise, insightful and sometimes witty phrases of *Past, Present, East and West*.

This book of essays and lectures was assembled and presented as homage to Sherman E. Lee, oriental art scholar and director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (1958-83), who is often referred to as the dean of art museum directors. In the preface Remy G. Saisselin describes Lee as "a disinterested man of taste informed by knowledge and history," thereby suggesting that through these essays we will meet the true scholar, the rare objective thinker possessed of clear vision. Edward B. Henning's introductory note and Nelson Goodman's foreword similarly honor Lee. Any reader would assume—no doubt correctly—that all of these gentlemen are good friends of Lee. Their commentaries alone are worthwhile, thought-provoking contributions to the literature of our profession, and their scholarly positions are well reflected here. Although Saisselin and Henning appear to have edited the book, it is not clear who selected these particular essays from the larger body of Lee's writings. It seems odd that we are not told and are left wondering how much of Lee's personal choice is repre-

sented. For those who may wish to pursue Lee's thoughts in the greatest possible detail, a bibliography of his publications from 1941 through 1982 has been included.

The 13 essays, several of which were lectures, originally appeared between 1942 and 1978 in a variety of publications—from *Art Quarterly* to the *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*—and represent thinking from throughout his career. The selections are arranged in two categories: "Art, Museums, and Collecting" and "East and West."

"Art, Museums, and Collecting" is devoted to the social aspects of art and the institutions that collect and preserve art. For museum professionals from any discipline, there is much to be considered in this section; for those in art museums, Lee challenges some assumptions that have determined common practices in recent decades. Few of his comments will surprise the many colleagues who know Sherman Lee, but other readers, especially younger members of the profession, may indeed be surprised by his arguments and assertions. These essays should generate some very personal examination of one's motives and practices.

Lee is a conservative in a field that has increasingly liberalized its functions. Observing the development of the museum as a "center" for the arts with all of the activities that word may suggest, he dictates the profession to reconsider the primary and historical purpose of the museum—preservation. He writes in "The Idea of an Art Museum" (1969),

Once we admit the precedence of preservation, we are largely committed to the past. The argument that this concept of the museum is unworthy of "the living present" is the argument of those who are anti-historical, who fancy opinion over tradition and historically constructed taste, of fashion over style, of news over history.

"The Art Museum in Today's Society" (1969) admonishes more liberal planners that "the museum has indispensable functions uniquely its own, worth doing well, and in being done,

reflecting the intellectual and emotional order of the works of art which are the justification for its existence."

Contemporary museum educators, even more than museum administrators, are likely to balk at Lee's view of their work. In "Art Museums and Education" (1977) he expresses a general disregard for school programs and the standard museum tour. Lee does not claim that these didactic events are without value, but suggests they have very little impact on the development of visual literacy in society as a whole. He contends,

The art museum is not primarily an "educational" institution in the current limited interpretation of the word. . . . In the world of visual images, however, the museum is the primary source for education.

In an especially well-wrought phrase, Lee clarifies his point: "The submission of vision to literacy is not a victory but a tragic defeat—and one we could see about us if we were truly more than literate and believed in a broader concept of education."

There is much more to be pondered in the six essays on museums and art, all of which should be pondered occasionally by those who must preserve museums as well as art. From essay to essay, Lee is to be admired for his consistent points of view. Strict adherence to self-imposed, high standards can give an author pride and certain advantages in facing the public from a somewhat removed, philosophical position. Unfortunately, Lee does not address the practical problem of how museums can attract enough public support to continue to operate without providing the popular public programs he finds of little significance.

Four of the seven entries in the book's second part, "East and West," are devoted to Lee's specialty, oriental art. They are solid, fascinating pieces that illustrate the author's ability to address the scholarly community and the layman at the same time. They also frequently demonstrate his ability to relate seemingly dissimilar aspects of oriental art and compare Eastern and Western art. Some of his pro-

JAMES H. DUFF is director of the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and president of the Northeast Museums Conference.



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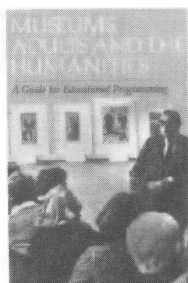
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adult education in museums and share successful programs that take a humanistic approach to interpreting museum collections for adults. xxiv + 399 pp., illus., bibliogs. \$15, \$12 to members.



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## BOOKS

nouncements may well cause debate among students of the subject. Other articles include a 1942 essay on "The Illustrative and Landscape Watercolors of Charles Demuth," which anticipates later and broader interest in Demuth and demands more attention to Demuth's importance. "The First *Calabazas* by Velasquez" argues for the acceptance of this work (in the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection) as a Velasquez.

In the final chapter, "Quality in Painting" (1969), Lee's greatest concern becomes his central theme. Here he examines the proper means by which to determine what constitutes quality in art. He does so, in part, by selecting and comparing pairs of reasonably similar works, such as two Chinese scrolls or paintings by Piet Mondrian and Fritz Glarner. He argues the superior quality of one illuminated manuscript over another, of Rembrandt's *The Jewish Bride* over Aert de Gelder's painting of the same title. The process that determines excellence, he tells us, is "comparison within a kind." To recognize quality one must constantly compare and not allow the process to become "mere literary virtuosity." Lee is very concerned with historical accuracy, as both a tool and a result of evaluation, and regrets that "the instant art history of some of the more subtle and productive writers is particularly misleading precisely because it pretends to be history rather than news or opinion."

In another essay Lee says that "art is above all a matter of quality and that quality is determined by comparison, most firmly and wisely in the light of historical judgment, if less firmly in contemporary evaluation." Similar statements, in one form or another, occur throughout *Past, Present, East and West*. For example, a central premise in the essay on education is that "in showing or juxtaposing visual images, the art museum provides an education unfamiliar to a word—and sound—oriented society." Other selections tell us that visual comparison is "the imperative means" to develop



taste and an understanding of history in any particular culture.

Therefore, in addition to the separate subjects they address, these 13 essays seem to establish Lee's lifelong concentration on a primary theme—excellence. The word occurs throughout the essays. It might be said that the first part is concerned with Lee's conception of quality in institutions and the second with quality in art. Beyond that generalization, however, there is much more to be found and thought about in this book; it should be read.

### Protecting Your Collection: A Handbook, Survey and Guide for the Security of Rare Books, Manuscripts, Archives, and Works of Art

Slade Richard Gandert. New York, N.Y.:  
Haworth Press, 1982. 144 pp., hardbound,  
\$19.95.

### Museum, Archive, and Library Security

Lawrence J. Fennelly. Woburn, Mass.:  
Butterworth Publishers, 1983. 891 pp.,  
hardbound, \$59.95.

*Reviewed by Barton B. Rinehart*

**P**rotecting Your Collection: A Handbook, Survey and Guide for the Security of Rare Books, Manuscripts, Archives and Works of Art by Slade Richard Gandert is a well-documented dissertation on library security. Although Gandert's book is directed at the library world, it is easily translatable to the museum world. It is, as the author claims, a survey and possibly a guide to securing libraries. It is not a handbook, as the subtitle of the book would lead you to believe.

The book's greatest value lies in the forceful discussion of the naivete and apathy that, unfortunately, are often displayed by professional librarians and curators. Gandert does this by stating the situation as it exists today, showing how we got here and giving numer-

BARTON B. RINEHART is chief of the security systems division of the Smithsonian Institution and chairman of the Standing Committee on Museum, Library and Archive Security of the American Society for Industrial Security.

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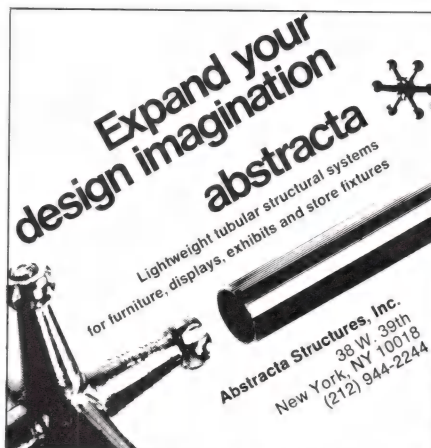
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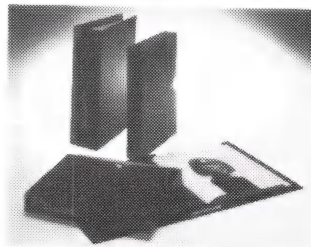
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ous examples of how losses were incurred and how they could have been prevented. He addresses not only the outside thief (substitute "scholar" for "thief"), but also the employee as thief, which is probably the biggest concern and the most difficult to combat.

There are a number of discussions in this book of which the reader must beware. After a good discussion about the responsibilities of the guard force, the author introduces the notion of the guard as "peace officer," which implies the guard is a police officer. Guards rarely have more power than the average citizen; they are just better trained to carry out this authority. Once the idea of peace officer was introduced, a description of the limitations and authorities of the various security services—guard, special police commission, commissioned police officer—should have been included.

Insurance is another subject that could have been better treated. Gandert states that there is no one policy that will cover the institution's collections. Although this may be true, Lawrence J. Fennelly's book, *Museum, Archive, and Library Security*, contains a comprehensive insurance policy and gives an example. I think the reader would do well to read chapter 4 of Fennelly's book and investigate other information before purchasing any insurance.

Several chapters in the book deal directly or indirectly with electronic surveillance and security devices. There are several excellent points made: keep surveillance simple, and use the staff as well as the guards. The staff must be aware of everything that goes on because guards cannot watch everybody and do not always know when something is being handled improperly. Choosing the right electronic security equipment can help. Gandert's recommendation to use audiodetection equipment is good for large empty buildings, but he does the institution director and the security industry a disservice when he suggests using dummy equipment and implies that all other systems are so racked with false alarms

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that they should not be used. A more balanced approach showing the need for integrated systems would be more appropriate. To suggest using dummy equipment without examining its advantages, disadvantages and dangers does not give the uninitiated reader enough information to pursue the subject, even with another security professional.

This is a book that must be carefully used. Gandert makes many good points, and *Protecting Your Collection* should raise the consciousness of the professionals and governing bodies of cultural institutions. There are other opinions stated in the book, however, that I believe will lead the reader to a sense of false security. For this reason, any nonsecurity professional who reads this book should contact a security professional for a more balanced approach to the implementation requirements.

**M**useum, Archive, and Library Security by Lawrence J. Fennelly is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive compilation of information on cultural institution security available in a single book. I use the word compilation because Fennelly did not write the entire book—he did better than that. The majority of the chapters in the book are written by highly respected leaders in the field of museum, archive, library and industrial security, law enforcement, insurance or other fields directly related to the security of cultural institutions.

Cultural institution security practitioners should become intimately familiar with and use *Museum, Archive, and Library Security* as a reference manual or a training tool for their employees. Museum directors should also acquaint themselves with the book because it takes the mystery out of security and provides additional information with which to aid the security director. This book could also serve as a basic text in courses on cultural institution security or a master's program in museology.

The book's overall organization is good; it logically leads the reader through the various subjects that affect security, beginning with a good overview of the situations found in museums. The section on risk management first addresses insurance on a philosophical level and as it is viewed

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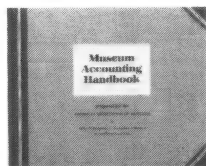
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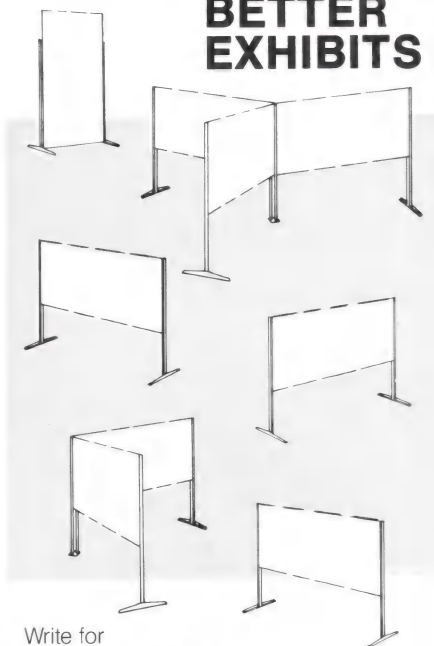
*Museum Accounting Handbook* by William H. Daughtrey, Jr., and Malvern J. Gross, Jr. is a practical, thorough handbook for nonaccountants in non-profit organizations. *Philanthropy Monthly* calls it a "do-it-yourself" manual with a step-by-step set of procedures and forms . . . Price Waterhouse and Co., and the AAM have clearly recognized an important need and made a major contribution." ix + 158 pp., illus., bibliog., index, \$14, \$11.50 to members.



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in Europe. Larger museums should be particularly interested in the European outlook because they ship art to and receive exhibits from European museums. The second chapter, which thoroughly discusses the various sections of an insurance policy, is more important to museums that do not have full-time risk managers. Throughout the reader is constantly reminded that "proper security and fine-art insurance are practically inseparable" and that insurance rates and premiums are directly related, among other things, to the security of the institution. Fennelly also implies that proper security will pay for itself in lower insurance rates, and the sample comprehensive fine arts insurance policy is well worth studying.

This section addresses insurance only, however, and in this sense it implies that a risk manager is interested only in insurance protection. The risk

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manager is interested in *all* aspects of protecting the facility and its treasures and should constantly be looking for ways to improve security while keeping the costs within bounds. Keep in mind insurance does not protect the treasures; it only covers the financial losses suffered.

The section on managing museum security describes the many duties of the security manager, thus emphasizing the human element in security. Security is everyone's business, and anyone—visitor, staff or management—may succumb to the temptations of theft if the opportunity arises. The security force's principal job is to reduce or eliminate those opportunities.

While I wholeheartedly agree that security and public relations personnel must work together, chapter 7 (on fundamentals) belongs in a public relations handbook, not a security book. Chapter 8, however, should have emphasized the importance of talking to rather than "stonewalling" the press in a crisis.

Fire prevention and emergency planning are two subjects that should not be combined; unfortunately Fennelly

did just that. Both topics are important and deserve to be appropriately recognized. Fire poses the greatest threat to museums and should have been discussed separately. Emergency planning, on the other hand, could have been included with security management because planning is an essential part of management.

Although "Building Security and Fire Safety" (1980) by Byron M. Johnson of the National Research Council of Canada is out of date, it is still one of the best discussions on fire exits. The National Fire Safety Code (NFPA 101) has been changed since 1980 and now allows the locking of fire exits when the locking systems are tied into the fire detection system and open automatically in the event of a fire. As a result of this change there are at least four systems on the market that enhance security operations while providing adequate fire safety. "Fire Protection Systems and Fire Prevention Techniques" is a most valuable chapter. Stephen U. Weldon, superintendent of the museum building division, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, is eminently qualified to tackle the grow-

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## BOOKS

ing controversy over the use of halon and water sprinkler systems in museums; and tackle it he does. Anybody contemplating installing a fire detection or fire suppressant system in his institution or renovating his facility must read this chapter. After reading the chapter, however, one should then hire a fire protection engineer to assist in the final decision.

The pragmatic discussion about emergency planning by John Hunter, curator for the National Park Service and a security professional, gives the planner a good bit of information on how to proceed and what to include in an emergency plan. But it leaves out the important step of informing the press, which, although presented in earlier public relations chapters, should have been mentioned in the emergency plan.

"Security Methods for Museums, Art Facilities, and Libraries" is the largest section of the book and provides a lot of

practical and valuable information on security theory, alarm systems and equipment, closed circuit television, security standards and specifications, inspections and evaluations, and transportation. The glossaries of alarm system and closed circuit television terms are also useful. I found several minor problems with this section, however. The discussion of the McCulloh Loop leaves the reader with the belief that each fire detection sensor transmits an individually coded signal to the monitoring station. In reality each detector sends a common signal to a McCulloh transmitter, which sends a coded signal to the monitor indicating there is a fire in the general area (e.g., the entire floor or building) covered by all of the detectors connected to that specific transmitter. Second, because most people, even security professionals, do not have a good grasp of the differences among radio transmission media, I believe there should have been a more detailed discussion of the pros and cons of the various types of wireless alarm systems. Third, the closed circuit television (CCTV) presentation is too technical and should be simplified so that

nonsecurity persons can easily understand the system and how they can help in security operations. In addition, two particular points in the discussions on CCTV disturbed me. Using dummy cameras as an alternative to real cameras when money is tight is irresponsible. This not only provides a false sense of security, but the effectiveness of cameras, both real and dummy, is compromised when the public learns the cameras are not real. Also, CCTV is not a panacea that allows a significant reduction in the guard force. Operators cannot continuously watch a group of TV monitors and be expected to comprehend more than 20 percent of what they see unless they have electronic aids to alert them when something happens. CCTV can be a useful security aid only if it is properly applied and its limitations are understood.

The section on the security force does a creditable job of covering job descriptions, supervisory functions, training, guard manuals and the problem of vicarious liability (wrongs committed by an employee acting within the scope of his employment, for which

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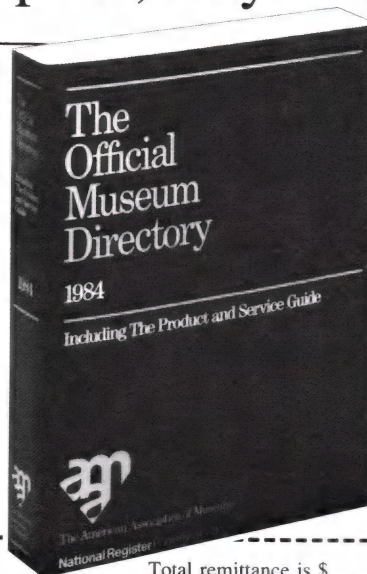
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## BOOKS

the employer may be held liable). Training, which is an absolute must if the guards are to protect the collection and themselves, is emphasized. In many institutions training stops in the classroom, and guards are left without a quick on-the-job reference. Steven Keller, director of Security, Art Institute of Chicago, developed an excellent pocket manual for guards at his museum that serves the purpose and sets a fine example for all of us. The section's greatest weakness is the extraordinary amount of time spent on first aid. The first chapter contains enough information to make the guard dangerous but not enough to be useful. The author should have stressed the importance of having good first-aid training and then left the training up to the experts such as the Red Cross. In addition, a statement that the security force may, at the discretion of

the curator, move artifacts is erroneous. The security force's main duty is to protect the collections, and, unless there is a crisis in which the curators are not present and treasures would be lost, guards should never handle the collection; it is not their responsibility, and they are not trained to do so.

The section on art theft and investigation underlines the importance of documenting one's collections and reporting thefts. Museums should keep detailed records of the collection in order to describe accurately its contents to the police (and others) involved in the investigation of a theft. And, without good records and descriptions of the collection, a museum cannot prove in a court of law that a particular item belongs to its collection. Reporting any theft and working with the investigator are essential to the collection's safety. The final chapter prepares readers to work with the investigator and provide him with information he needs even though he may not know what he needs. There is also a list of organizations, other than the local police, that are interested in assisting in the recovery of property. Cul-


tural institutions would be well advised to use such services.

The 70-page bibliography at the end of the book is well organized and indexed, includes publications on any subject relating to the protection of cultural property and lists names and addresses of helpful organizations. This is the single greatest bibliography I know of on the protection of cultural property.

Overall, the book is well written and indexed and covers most of the subjects that deal with the protection of a cultural institution. It is a book that deserves a place on every museum, historical society and library administrative bookshelf.  $\Delta$

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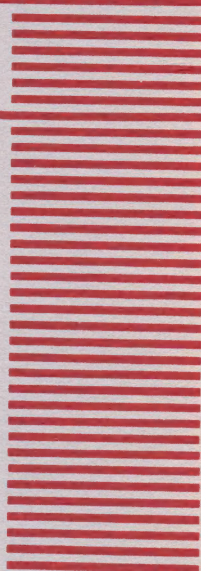
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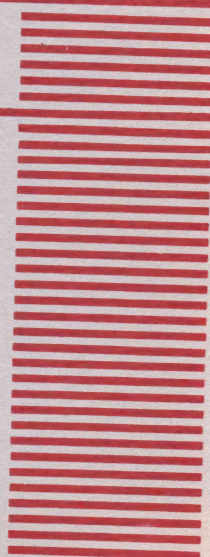
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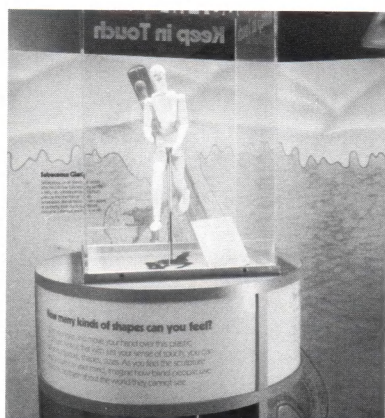
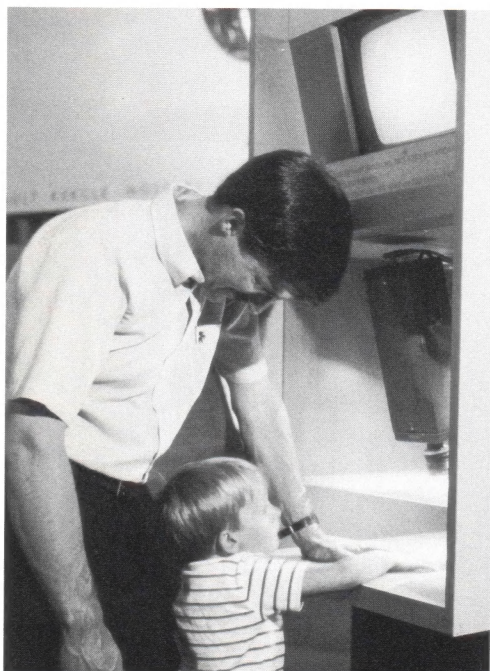
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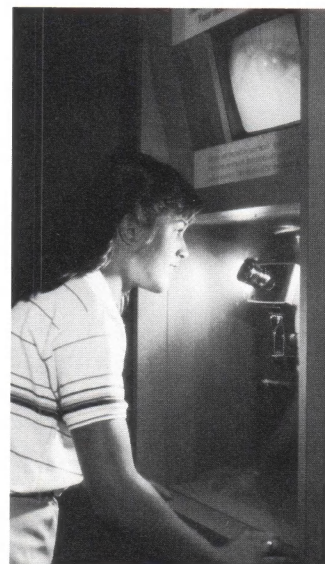


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